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God and Tommy Atkins

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God and Tommy Atkins

By Dr. Alexander Irvine, Author
of "My Lady of the Chimney Corner" :: :: ::



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Theology Library
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
AT CLAREMONT
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TO
THE MEN OF THE RED TRIANGLE
WITH WHOM I WORKED
IN THE 5TH ARMY AREA DURING
THOSE TRYING DAYS OF
MARCH 1918

GOD AND TOMMY ATKINS

(TALKS TO SOLDIERS)

I

THE SOUL OF TOMMY ATKINS

FOREWORD

How is it, with the soul of the soldier ?

I do not mean, the church member, or the nominal adherent, or the signers of cards or rolls or covenants. The experts tell us they are all right ! I mean Tommy Atkins who is unattached, uncatalogued and who, if classified at all, is listed in a theological " no man's land " of doubt and uncertainty, or entirely beyond the pale.

Of the courage of these we are sure. Their devotion, their sufferings and sacrifices are beyond question. The theologian has made his diagnosis. He has summed up the finer, nobler qualities of the unattached and uncaught. He calls it, " natural religion—not the religion of Christ." When he talks as a man he expresses himself differently. If we take him into a quiet corner and draw him out in a human sort of way, we find him ready to grant passports to the heroes who are unattached—passports to heaven. He cannot change his creed, he cannot call a convocation, that takes centuries, but just as a private judgment that expresses the inner feeling of his heart he *hopes* it will ultimately be well with Tommy's soul.

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Millions of tracts have been written. They are written from the standpoint of the creeds. Tommy does not read them. No greater waste has occurred in this war than the paper wasted in tracts ! The sermons have been in all keys, all tempos, all varieties. In both tracts and preachments there appears, not always, but in the main, the usual theological checks and balances and safeguards. We have changed our methods of life, revolutions have come as cometh the kingdom of God—without observation. Society is in a fluid condition. It will flow easily in the direction of necessity. Labour has changed, politics have changed, business has changed, science has made progress, art responds. The world is being remade, but the *status quo ante bellum* in theology stands !

No new words in the vocabulary of religion, no new ideas of the divine, no new hopes have been born in the cataclysm. In the realm of the soul we are still hammering away at the methods of our ancestors and they seem to be as effective as an ancient battering-ram would be in modern warfare. We are still wearing the second-hand intellectual garments of the middle ages and they fit us as the armour in the Tower of London would fit the fighting men in Flanders !

Many feel the situation, few speak of it loud enough to be heard. Tommy Atkins is by no means oblivious to what is going on, or not going on. He is giving his body for England and is taking chances on the care, the future care, of his soul.

I have heard a preacher abuse Tommy in language that would make Billingsgate blush. I have heard another warn him of a hell that yawned in front of him. I have seen an exhorter work himself into tears over the impending doom of two hundred men who were going to the front the next day, and I have seen those same men march out of the meeting as unmoved

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spiritually as if they had been listening to a lecture on the atomic theory.

Was it because they didn't care? No. Was it because they didn't believe what they heard? Not entirely. It was because they had a different and a better conception of God than the preacher had!

Many preachers have been wiser than these. Many are optimistic and rise above their creeds—*sub rosa*. Padres have distinguished themselves—as the soldiers have at the front, in sacrifice and heroism. But few padres have distinguished themselves in their own sphere, the sphere of the intellect, of the soul.

What England needs at this crucial moment—this moment of doubt concerning the soul of the unattached—is a man, big enough, spiritual enough and with clear vision to re-explore the vast continent of the Grace of God! There is a crying need to rethink Him and re-interpret Him in the light of present need, the need of a world that is as dear to God as was the ancient. The need of the hour is for men who will match the courage and sacrifice of the soldier by similar courage and similar sacrifice, in the realm of theology! Such courage may take a man out of his sectarian compound, but it will lift the souls of men out of the present Slough of Despond!

God is not dead. The last word has not been said of the Christ. We must tear the grave-clothes from our half-smothered souls and liberate them from a mausoleum of dead hopes!

"I ain't no bloomin' Catholic," said a soldier to me, "but when m' time comes I'll call for a Catholic padre; ee's got a zone you Protestants ain't got—'e gives a bloke a chance, 'e does." Roughly put, but rather logical. He was looking at final things, not through the padres, but through their creeds.

Another was still more blunt when he said: "I take no interest in your gum-shoe religion. W'en I goes over

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th' top, I says, ' Jesus, I'm goin' after th' Boche, take care o' m' poor soul, if you please.' "

The phrase, " gum-shoe religion," was new to me. I presume it has something to do with detectives, and the genius of the detective is to appear to be what he isn't !

Whatever mental reservations Tommy may have on the infinite variety of doctrines he hears, he has no illusions on the question of sin. He has a conscience and when he sits in judgment on his own moral actions he renders a verdict in accordance with the facts. He does it in his own rough way, but he does it.

Sometimes he asks a few awkward theological questions. He asks, for instance, why God permitted the war, why he doesn't stop it, and why one man going into action with an oath comes out unscathed, while another going over the top with a prayer on his lips, gets his head blown off ? He doesn't expect an answer. He knows there is no answer, but he enjoys as a relief from the monotonous routine, the mental gymnastics of the theologian trying to get around it.

We have had a number of volumes written by theologians who have watched Tommy in and out of action. Some of them are hopeful, some are hopeless. Some have suggested that he seeks cover in religion, before a battle, and resumes the flesh-pots when he comes out.

If this war has demonstrated anything, it has proved beyond cavil that Tommy Atkins is no coward. He is as good a man as Britain ever put on the field of battle. If he goes to communion before an attack, he probably does it as he signs cards and rolls. Like ourselves, he is a man of moods. Anyway, that is his concern, not ours.

We expected a revival and we based our expectation on the fact that he was facing death. The revival did not come. The average soldier fears death less than he fears life. The theologies of the past have made religion a sort of insurance policy or a fire-escape. A good many

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such policies have been issued during this war and before the ink was dry—to continue the metaphor—they had lapsed ! Despite our deluge of printed appeals, our legions of preachers, our millions of pounds spent in making religion palatable and attractive, Tommy Atkins seems to have made up his mind to blaze his own pathway to heaven. He will do it in the future more than he is doing it now. The hope for religion is big—the hope for the present religious machinery is small. Religion is not static. It is dynamic. It springs up fresh in the hearts of men and breaks old moulds. It will not stay in grooves. What Mazzini said to the youth of Italy needs to be said to the theologians of to-day :

“ Slumber not in the tents of your fathers. The world advances, advance with it ! ”

*Fern Bank,
Cookham Dean,
Berkshire.
July, 1917.*

II

BLOOD BEING THICKER THAN WATER

COMRADES :

It may be of interest to you to know why I am here. I am an American citizen and the United States is at present neutral—at least, the President is ; he issued the neutrality proclamation. Thousands of Americans are fighting under the Union Jack and the Tricolour of France, some are in the Russian Army.

The news of the battle of Mons went through our country like an electric shock ! It was our call to arms. The President might issue a thousand proclamations after that and they would have been as much heeded by individuals as one of those pickle advertisements you see from a train window. To those of us of Anglo-Saxon or Celtic origin it was the call of the blood.

With me personally it was a little different. I had served seven years in the old British Army. I had done my bit in Egypt long ago and when I read the story of the retreat from Mons the blood in my veins seemed to change. The most restless period of my life was between the battle of Mons and the battle of the Somme. I was a professional teacher. I was counsellor to five hundred cadets—ninety-five per cent. of whom I hope to see in the American Army and Navy before the end of another year—and that means that they will be fighting

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on the side of the Entente against Germany. I finished my teaching year. Then I came at my own expense to lend a hand to my tribe and clan. The curious thing about this change in my life was that I had been a pacifist for many years—a peace-at-any-price man. With pen and voice I had advocated the doctrine of non-resistance. I do not believe in war, even now.

But here is the situation. Germany is a warlike nation. Geographically she is locked in. She is growing and feels that she must expand. She uses the pretext of a quarrel between Austria and Serbia to launch her into a war of expansion. She asks England to stand by and let her subdue France. She ploughs her way through Belgium and without excuse attacks France. She throws into the discard all rights and all treaties.

I asked one of the sanest Germans in New York what he thought of the wholesale raping of women and girls in Belgium and with an oath he said they might be d——d glad they had German blood in their veins! That is the common psychology of Germany.

There remains but one of two things to do in a case of that kind. Either accept the psychology and let the Germans overrun France and England, hand over the result of long centuries of struggle and become a vassal of the Kaiser, or resist and fight.

I put that proposition to a pacifist M.P. a few days ago and here is his answer: "It is absolutely impossible for Germany to invade England," he said—and he told me of the secret defences—the navy, etc. The graves of the dead who were killed in London alone is sufficient answer to that. But even if the Germans could not touch England he was apparently willing that they should invade France, wipe Belgium off the map and turn her female population into a harem or a brothel for German soldiers.

Every instinct of my being revolts at a weak, cowardly

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policy of that sort. In obedience to those instincts I came to fight. If the Kaiser says : " Let the God that answereth by fire be God," I accept his challenge.

It is not a question of patriotism to me—it is not pride of race ; it is not a swinging of the bloody shirt. It is a question of honour against dishonour, right against wrong, tyranny against liberty and I reject with absolute scorn any god or gods or any religion that would ask me to fold my hands and innocuously stand aside while Germany did to my people or any people what she did to Belgium.

In the United States there are many millions of men who think as I think, and there will come a time when the love-letters between our President and the Kaiser will come to an abrupt end and our nation will take her stand on the side of right.

I wanted to join up. Of course even in dire extremity the authorities look twice before they accept a man who did his bit a generation ago. I was told I could serve England best by inspiring my younger comrades—by " stirring up their pure minds by way of remembrance." So I am here to add my spirit to your spirit, to clasp your hand and bid you God-speed in the great adventure.

Behind the firing line there must be spirit. That spirit lives in the atmosphere of faith, confidence, gratitude and love. When the soldier knows that these things are behind him he becomes a better fighter and a better man.

I have worn your uniform. I have lived your life. I speak your language. Furthermore, the great majority of you are of the working class. To that class I belong. I fought my way up over the jagged rocks of unfortuitous circumstances and secured an education. My struggles had but one object in view ; they were borne in order that I might be of service to the masses of the people to whom I belonged. I believe that out of this seething whirlpool of chaos, order will come and a better world

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will be the result. You are soldiers of a mighty crusade—the greatest history has ever known, and if I can't go with you into the trenches I can stand as you go and cheer !

And as you go, I salute you as sons of God ! Brothers in the circle of blood and fire that is reshaping the world on a new model. I salute you as soldiers of Christ who are ready and willing to lay down your lives for your friends—your homes, your children and your Empire ! God strengthen your arms ! God give you victory !

Ripon, Yorks.

III

TOMMY ATKINS AT SCHOOL

COMRADES :

Your spare time in this camp is small. The drills, parades, fatigues and night operations take up the time, and when you are not under instruction or on guard you are getting a change and a rest.

I want to make an appeal to you to-night for the organization of your spare time, small as it is !

You have come together as the organized man-power of the nation. You come from farm and shop and factory and mine, from cities, towns, and villages. You come from north and south, you speak all dialects of your mother tongue. Mobilized here in close quarters you have a closer view of human life than you have ever had before. The extremes of human character come close together. Like a molten mass on the anvil you are being hammered into one mighty arm. It brings with it new temptations peculiar to our sex, and it brings tremendous advantages too.

The first thing I discovered in the service was that I had a body. Some of you probably cannot see the philosophy of body-training as you get it here. I used to walk like a giraffe ! The parade ground straightened me out more quickly than was entirely to my liking and I have noticed quite a number here who reminded me of

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the giraffe period of my life! (Laughter.) I'm glad you recognize the picture! I have a few others and while you are in good humour I'll hand them out!

The purpose of the physical training is to fit you to endure hardness as a good soldier, but I ask you to make it the foundation of a new physical life. This war will not—cannot—last many more years, and when you go back to civil life you will have gained a big asset in erectness and carriage that will go with you through life. If an honest man is the noblest work of God, a shambling, slouching, sprawling thing on two knock-kneed legs, and turned-in toes, is the most ignoble!

Physical culture is part of the game—and by the way, nothing is more astounding to a soldier of the old army than to see the play element introduced in the making of a fighting man of the new army. Well, being part of the game you play it in drill hours.

It's quite a different question when we come to consider how a soldier in the crisis of a great war can improve his mind. There is not a man in front of me quite as ignorant as I was when I put on the Queen's uniform! I became a waiter so that around the ward-room table on the old *Alexandra* I could acquire a vocabulary. I used to have a little pad and pencil attached, and I jotted down new and strange words during the day, and at night, under a fighting lamp when others were in their hammocks, I was looking up the history of these words in a dictionary.

I struck a veritable gold-mine once in that ship. A young sub-lieutenant, named Charles Lionel Napier, came on board. I was intensely struck with his general bearing. He was a tall, splendidly proportioned man, and the essence of gentlemanliness. But it was his language that attracted me. It was so attractive that I gave the marine who had been told off as his servant a five-pound note to give me the job. Down in the flats, below decks, stood Mr. Napier's chest. That was his

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dressng-room ! The minutes I spent there as his flunkey were more precious to me than hours in a university class-room. It was like an artist working from a model. I don't know whether he is living or dead, but I have carried a deep sense of gratitude in my heart for him ever since. I mention these simple things to show you that my first teachers were my comrades and officers, and that many years before I ever reached a college I made the world, just as I found it, my school. The first book I ever read was "John Halifax—Gentleman." I was your age when I read it. I read it first for the story, then for the philosophy of life in it, then for the vocabulary. I memorized ten pages of it. That was the door through which I entered English Literature.

Despite the fact of your busy life, despite the intense occupation of the busy hours, I know and you know, that to each of you there is from one to three hours free each day. I beg of you to get a masterpiece—they are very cheap—and give ten minutes a day to the study of it. Our tastes are different and each will select what suits him. I selected "John Halifax" because I wanted to see how a poor, ignorant boy could make the most of life. My selection was good—yours may be better. Take "David Copperfield"—you can buy it for a shilling—there are a hundred characters in it, and about fifteen of them are immortal ; it is a thrilling story, and in it there is a profound philosophy of life—get it—get the philosophy !

The last post will blow in a few minutes and I must hurry.

In an Irish potato field—unkempt and untaught, and with scarcely enough clothing on me to dust a violin, I had an experience. It was a delicate, mystical thing, and too beautiful and tender to be described in words. It is sufficient to say that in that strange vision I got a glimpse of *The Great Comrade*, and there came with that

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glimpse something that education cannot give nor circumstances take away. Out of my rags and dirt I arose and started to follow that light.

My young comrades, I hold no brief for creeds or forms, personally I care very little for them, but I can tell you that that vision of the Master has been to me a sheet-anchor holding steady to course the ship of my life! Your life is on the altar of your country, you have faced and will face death in many forms—as you do so, do it with Him. As you go over the top remember His words: “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.”

Antrim, Ireland.

IV

THE WAR AFTER THE WAR

COMRADES :

After this talk we are to have a symposium on the topic. I will try to answer questions, but we will avoid argument. All life is changing. Nothing but human nature will be quite the same. It is a period of house cleaning and rearrangement. I want to present to you the claims of the Christian religion.

Christianity has had a wonderful history—wonderful in many respects. The gospel or good news given to the world by Jesus was founded on Love. Love of God to men—the love of men for each other. The chapter I read to-night (xiii. of 1 Cor.) is Paul's summing-up of Christianity in its entirety. The appeal of that vision leaves no heart untouched. There is no question to be asked about it. It is a self-evident truth. No matter how limited we may be in our intellectual outlook, no matter how little we know of sacred history, or forms, or ceremonies, or creeds, or sects, we know intuitively that Jesus was the incarnation of that Love. He gave the world its first real look at God. He taught us to see Him as father. There is no blackboard demonstration of God. The nexus is beyond the realm of what we call science. Jesus wrote no books. He founded no church. The great majority of books

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written and sects founded were founded in zeal for Him, but it is undeniable that in many cases the zeal was without wisdom; it was the negation of love. Hence we have had persecution, intolerance and bloodshed—Christian zealots grappling each other by the throat. As the world grew older it grew wiser, and the bitterness of misdirected zeal is dying out.

The world is in a position now not very unlike the situation that Jesus found in Judea. Religion we have, but it is formal. We are in a rut. Beautiful buildings, rituals hoary with age and cold as death, inflexible laws, traditions and creeds have gradually squeezed out the life and love of the Founder. We are just as punctilious about our forms as the Pharisees were about theirs, and I am afraid the Pharisee has survived and is still in our midst, thanking God that he is not as other men!

The heart of the rank and file of democracy is in the right place. The common people are as susceptible to love and tenderness and devotion as they were in the time of Christ. The trouble is higher up, where membership in a sect has become a social status and the symbol of superiority. I have talked with thousands of soldiers on this question. They all feel alike—they are yearning for a new day—a day of simple faith, simple living and a religion that is life. I have talked with scores of ministers. They don't know what to do. The denominational walls are so high, the creeds are so fixed, the traditions are so stereotyped. They, too, are looking and longing for a spiritual revival. I notice, however, that most of them are looking for it to come within the compound of their own particular sect. It may not come that way. It will not come to glorify our sect or to add to our conceit. Indeed, it may obliterate both. We must ask Him to show us the

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way—we may not tell Him our way and ask Him to work in that.

I appeal to you, comrades, because you are the men who will settle this world strife. It is your day. The world looks to you. You will agree with me, I am sure, that if nothing better than a defeat of the Germans is to come out of this war, then much of human sacrifice will have been in vain. The enemy at home must be dealt with, the ravages of the liquor traffic—the unjust social conditions, the subtle evils that degrade and befoul life must be dealt with. How is this to be done? It is to be done on the plan of old Nehemiah when the vision of rebuilding Jerusalem came to him: “Every man over against his own house.”

Every man in front of me can help. First of all, he must set his own house in order. He must put a curb and bit on his passions. He must restrain for the common good evil impulses. He may do this by the methods of the Stoic—an iron will, but a better way is the vision of the Christ, open to all. In that will come will-power and a tender loving kindness that was unknown to the disciples of Epictetus.

I invite you, therefore, as soldiers of Christ, to prepare yourselves for a war, after the war; a war not against flesh and blood, but against the powers of darkness in the human heart and in social life.

THE SYMPOSIUM

Question: 'Ow is it we gets fed up on these 'ere 'oly words when we don't want to? (Laughter.)

Answer: If you refer to the talk I gave a few minutes ago—(laughter)—I should say it was due to two things—first, my lack of imagination in presenting the truth in an interesting way, and second, the sickly condition of your mind. But the fact is, we are all fed up on

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empty phrases and holy words, which are uttered by speakers who are dogmatic and limited, not only in their selection of phrases, but also in their intellectual outlook.

Comment and Question (by a private and an Oxford graduate): I don't think he referred to your address, but to the common thought in most of our minds that whatever of reverence or faith or desire there is in us, is not developed but rather retarded by the ordinary presentation of religious truth. We feel that there is something wrong. Is it our obtuseness and materialism, or—(A voice: "Or is the dope stale?"—loud laughter)—is it a matter of the inappropriateness of old methods in new times?

Answer: I think the comrade who spoke of "dope" hails from the New World! (The same voice: "Sure! A Connecticut Yankee from Bridgeport!") My apologies to the first questioner for not penetrating deep enough into the meaning of his question. There is a sort of official stewardship of the faith. I don't think the stewards are rendering a good account of their stewardship. We need new methods, and they keep harping on one string. Each generation must decide the channels through which the truth must flow. We feel no more comfortable in the religious methods of our ancestors than we would in their old clothes or than you soldiers would in the old armour in the Tower of London! But that is only one phase of the question. If we fail in personal responsibility the best methods in the world will not help us much. Each man must stand on his own feet—feel his own responsibility to God, adjust his relationship to the message of Christ and function in his own place.

Question: How about this National Mission business?

Answer: *What* about it? (Laughter.)

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Question : Will it do any good ?

Answer : Certainly ! But it is the movement of a sect. True, it is the sect with a monopoly of state sanction and state patronage, but that does not make it national. A national movement is one that affects the people of the nation. This movement affects a small section of the people. It will do them good, it is a healthy sign and deserves our encouragement. No sect in Britain is in as great need of repentance and hope as the Church of England.

Question : Can a man know God ?

Answer : Yes. But to know God is a vastly different thing to knowing about God. A man may be a master mind in theology and yet not *know* Him. To solve the mysteries of science is a work of the head. To know God is a work of the heart. Jesus set a child in the midst of his disciples and said : You must become "as a little child" to enter in.

Question : Why doesn't God stop this war ?

Answer : He will. He will not do it by a miracle. He will not inspire us to meet the Kaiser's poison gas by a shower of roses or powder puffs. He works His will through the means of men. The Allies are inspired by the belief that the defeat of the Germans will mean a better world. To accomplish that we pit force against force. Though not the best, it is the only thing we can do, and we leave the results with God.

Question : How long do you think it will last ?

Answer : Like you, I can only guess at it. My opinion, however, is that it will last four years. When it has raged three years I think my country—the United States—will come in. I hope so, anyway. We can put ten million soldiers in the field. We can finance the Allies, we can patrol the seas, we can build fleets of ships for the merchant service. We invented the U boat, we can invent its master. When the Stars and

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Stripes fly on the Western front, and American air squadrons make the Allied powers complete and absolute masters of the air, look out for the German white flag ! (Cheers.)

Question : Do you believe in hell ?

Answer : Yes.

Question : Where is it ?

Answer : Where there is no harmony, where lust is rife and injustice is rampant, where labour is devoid of art, where men and women are herded together in conditions not fit for cattle, where there is pride, envy, hatred and malice. Where little children are deprived of light and air and beauty, where there is sin, dirt and vulgarity ! Hell is where God is not !

Question : What about the hell of fire ?

Answer : Oh, that's for the theologians !—(laughter)—I mean—(loud laughter)—that is for the theologians to decide !

Salisbury Plain.

A DAY'S ADVENTURE

COMRADES :

Apart from questions of history, revelations, miracles, Deity, immortality and all other such questions over which controversy has raged for two thousand years, try this simple experiment : make up your mind that for one whole day *you will live as you think the Master would have you live !* Your ideas of Him are hazy. You have some doubt, some misgiving. You have not studied or read deeply or widely. The element of certainty is lacking, but you have an idea that, behind all hidebound ecclesiasticism, all iron creeds, all theological divisions and subdivisions ; back of the clerics and theologues and controversialists, there is something real, genuine and true. Very well then, just as a student experiments in a laboratory with material elements, you can experiment upon yourself. It will be a spiritual experiment, but the result will be as real to you as any exercise or practice in matters military, and perhaps more real.

The days go by quickly, there are three hundred and sixty-five of them in a year. Here, with the business of soldiering, one day is as another. Vocation and avocation follow each other as matters of routine. The experiment, being a matter of mind, would be a strictly

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private affair. *For one day*—from the first note of réveillé to the last note of last post, hold that image in your mind. It will be a spiritual adventure, an experiment in psychology, an alembic, a smelter the fires of which will burn out the dross and reveal the gold of spiritual thinking. You need no preparation. For the purposes of the experiment you may be good or bad or indifferent. Just follow the gleam, hold the ideal in front of you. Square every act, every impulse, every conversation with the thought that He is your comrade for the day. That He hears all, sees all and knows all. If you are true to the experiment you will learn something—something original—first hand. Preachers have to be much more than ordinary to hold your attention, the most familiar print and the most sacred become stale and stereotyped. They are poor substitutes, they are finger-posts pointing the way, and, alas, many who point the way never go themselves ! But here you become, in the university of the soul, a class of one with the teacher, who is a personal friend, companion, comrade. What you learn in that silent school will be of more use to you than the reading of many books. I cannot tell you *what* you will learn, for I am not you. You will learn something. At the close of the day you might spend five minutes making up a balance sheet—a debit and credit account—a report of the experiment. It might make a good story. You might name it, “The story of a day’s adventure,” or “What the Great Comrade said to me in the silence.” *Try it for one day !*

Catterick Bridge, Yorks.

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THE OLD ORDER CHANGETH

COMRADES :

The labour unions have an agreement with the Government that when the war is over the *status quo ante* will be resumed. That is to say, that as they laid the rules of their unions on the table for the time being, they will take them up again and resume work, holding all they had fought and suffered for during long years of struggle. As one who has held the highest office in the gift of a great labour movement in America, I give you my opinion for what it is worth on the subject. The *status quo ante* has gone. It will not return. Nothing will ever again be just as it was. The Government cannot make good its promise. Labour will not want them to do so when the time comes. An imperceptible revolution has been taking place from the start. It will continue. Labour cannot prevent it. The Government cannot prevent it. Traditions have been swept into the scrap heap. New methods have been adopted, not for the duration of the war, but for all time. Women have come in by the hundreds of thousands. They will not march out as readily as some people suppose when the war is over. They cannot. It will take time and patience to readjust, but it will be done. The employers will demand more—the labourer will demand more, and both will be better off than they were.

The greatest change of all is the changed mental attitude of the worker. Out of the most sordid environment he has gone forth as a soldier—the equal, as a fighter, of all other men—he has faced death—he has offered himself on the altar of his country. A touch of drama enters into the texture of his make-up, a touch

THE OLD ORDER CHANGETH

of poetry too. He has been singing and fighting, and in a great drama, a great adventure, and never again will he be as he was. Never again will he be content to live in a place not fit for the housing of cattle. This is as it should be, no capitalist would have it differently—he, too, is a fighter and an Englishman. The rich and the poor, the educated and the ignorant, the strong and the weak, have all gone together—they have been welded into one solid mass, and it is unthinkable that they could ever be so far apart as they were. British democracy has made a stride that, judged by the progress of the past, means a hundred years. Without discipline there can be no such thing as an army, and yet, as a soldier of the old order, I say unhesitatingly that this modern army is a democratic army!

And that leads me also to say that discipline is as necessary to democracy as to an army. It's a different kind, but it's discipline. In democracy discipline means balance, restraint, right direction of force, self-control. The democratic leader who does not embody these things in his personality is a dangerous man to follow.

I never lose sight of the fact that the vast majority of the men in front of me are of the working class. My special appeal to you is that, while you are in the cataclysm, you get all that there is in it for your future citizenship. It is a terrible school—a school of death, but also a school of life. It is a terrific necessity, but also a tremendous opportunity. Our minds are quickened, our souls are on fire. We are keyed up to a high pitch. That elevation and tension will be maintained until our work is done. Then with a new zeal the task will be for a better, nobler, juster England. In that higher life may Ireland, too, lift up her head and march in step. To make a better British Empire, to build it on a more enduring foundation, the job must begin at home, right

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here at the centre of things. To right world wrongs, to remove the heel of the oppressor from the neck of the weak (as in Belgium), to press back the German Moloch, to beat down militarism, to raise the tone of life, to make it hard to do wrong and easy to do right is a religious act. It is of the essence of religion.

Winchester.

VI

WHAT IS PRAYER ?

COMRADES :

To many Christians prayer seems to be a pious mendicancy ! A continual contemplation of material or spiritual beggary, and a Uriah Heep attitude toward the Almighty ! Prayers continually concerned about the petty details of personal wants and Pecksniffian sins must find scant reception in the consideration of the eternal. How could it be otherwise ? Here is a story, thoroughly authenticated. It was related in a "men's prayer meeting" in the heart of London and in the second decade of the twentieth century : "Some of you men pray for big things," said one man, who imagined he was inspiring the others. "And it is right that we should pray for big things, *but I pray for little things*. Now, for instance, I was playing golf the other day and I lost my ball. What did I do ? I prayed to God that I might find it, *and I found five !*"

To the five men who lost the balls this good brother's prayer was answered by a deity vastly different to what he had in his muddled mind ! If God is not nauseated, He must be greatly amused at that kind of piffle. That He has to listen to much of it an attendance at prayer meeting will make painfully evident. Prayer is not begging. It is not asking for *things*. It is not a beggar

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whine. It is the expansion of the soul of man out toward the heart of God. It is the soliloquy of a spirit that knows God, and when a man knows God he ceases to whine and beg. He is at one with the Father, and is supremely conscious that what He doeth He doeth well.

Back of all our muddling and mummary there stands one supreme fact: *God is*. When that fact sinks deep into the consciousness of the individual he says: "*I am*." Then prayer becomes a contemplation of the world and the affairs of the world from the standpoint not of a beggar but of God!

Every time I hear a man pray in a beggarly, whining, droning tone for a few measly gratuities I want to throw a boot at him! The man who is God-conscious stands erect. He plays the game and takes what comes. If life is unfortuitous he may have a head that is bludgeoned and bloody, but it will be unbowed!

Prayer is an attitude toward life as well as a link that connects us with the Infinite. It is a clear perception of relations. It is a divine explosion of a pent-up emotion. It is more divine in action than in words. It does not contemplate God as sitting on a marble throne beyond the clouds, but at work in the world—in all worlds!

We are in a world war. Unless nine out of every ten of us are fools we are fighting for a principle. That principle is warp and woof and texture of religion. It's no use asking God to rend the heavens and come down. With what light we have, our prayer must be one of action. Shells are prayers, the roar of the guns, the rattle of musketry, the noise of the propellers in the air, the swish of the ships of war as they plough through the water—these are prayers.

The husbanding of resources, the economy of food, of clothes, of money become acts of worship. The spirit

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that supports, comforts and sustains the soldier as he bears the brunt of battle is a spirit of prayer.

The highest ideals we know teach us that the coward, the shirker and the squanderer is immoral. If we belong to this category a change of front is prayer. Labour is prayer. Sacrifice is prayer. Love in action is prayer.

The prayer of the man who found somebody else's golf balls was foolish, and, as far as he had any, his was a vicious influence. They live in a fool's paradise who think that sort of thing is religion or prayer—or good common sense !

To find out as nearly as we can the will of God and do it—that is prayer. We are children of the Great Father ; as we greet each dawn let us look up into His face and smile—smile and tell Him that we know the way that He leadeth and will follow ! That is prayer !

London.

VII

METHOD AND INSPIRATION

COMRADES :

Despite the endless activity of the soldier's life there comes to him a sense of monotony. He gets what we call "fed up" with the sameness of the routine. That tired feeling comes, not so much from the sameness of the daily round, as from the fact that soldiering becomes the lock, stock and barrel of life. There is nothing beyond. "Where there is no vision the people perish," says the Bible, and vision means the thing beyond the thing we are at.

When a man mounts the first rung of the ladder of promotion he instantly gets a look beyond. No man ever expected to stop at the stage of a lance-corporal. But the vast majority must of necessity be privates in the ranks, and it is to such men that weariness comes first. It is to you men who become "fed up" that I offer these few suggestions.

The army is a hard school. I have been there and I know. Yet I venture to assert that the dullest man in front of me may make it a real school in which he can learn much. When I was in the ranks I was blest with something to drive at. I had an incentive. I wanted to improve my mind and I made everything I did serve that purpose. First of all, then, I want to urge you to

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get something to drive at ! I can't name it. You must do that. Get a great book and master it—take a language and begin to learn it. You can study law or art or theology. The books are printed. You can obtain them easily. When the war is over you are going back to your little town, or village, or city. You will be needed in the building of the new England. Study citizenship. Study the problems that we are all going to face a year hence. While I am speaking you are meeting my suggestions with mental reservation. You are pitting against each suggestion the hours of drill, parade, marching ! I know all that. I've been through it all, but I know and you know that every man here has a little time each day. If it is only half an hour you can give ten minutes to continuous and sustained effort. Yes, I know, it will require some strength of will to begin and more to go on—but the alternative to driving is drifting. And to merely drift is to miss life and all that's in it.

Now here are two points that I think will be a help to you. First a few lines of poetry from Browning as to method :

“ This low man sees a little thing to do,
Sees it and does it.
This high man with a great thing to pursue
Dies ere he knows it.
This low man goes on adding one to one,
His hundreds soon hit.
This high man aiming at a million
Misses an unit ! ”

This hint as to method is not for the genius. It is for the man who finds it hard to study. It is for the man who feels that he is worse off in this respect than anybody else. It shows him that the way to begin is to *begin*. Item by item, little by little, line by line, keeping at it he will

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succeed better than the man with an ideal so big and so far out of his reach that he will work a week at it and then drop it for six months. It's the old story of the tortoise and the hare. It has been done. It can be done. You can do it, comrade !

In the beginning of any task you need more than a good method. You need inspiration. Not particularly the inspiration of the thing itself, but an inspiration that will be bigger than the thing you are driving at, and yet include it.

A line or two from the poetry of Sidney Lanier will serve my purpose this time. He says in his wonderful poem, "The Marshes of Glynn" :

" As the marsh hen secretly builds on the watery sod,
Behold I will build me a nest
In the greatness of God ! "

You are not quite sure about your own strength. Well, in this spirit you may link your weakness to the strength that is divine. Go away out from the known to the unknown as the marsh hen does, and build you a nest on the greatness of God. He would just as soon lend you a hand as anybody else. Stretch out your hand to Him and make a break. Take a header into your unknown possibilities and see what you can discover !

Wareham.

VIII

BODY, SOUL AND SPIRIT

THE BODY

COMRADES :

The distinction between soul and spirit is something the average man does not bother much about. In the popular mind they are the same thing.

The Bible makes a difference. It speaks of body, soul and spirit. It does not lay down any hard and fast rules. It is not always consistent about the distinction, but the distinction is made, and we think it is a good one.

The body is the material part of us. It is the foundation—everything else is superstructure. The body is our first concern—with some it is the only concern. The Greeks made much of the cultivation of the body. There is no reason why we shouldn't do the same. It is a temple in which dwells our souls and spirits, and it has been called the temple of the Holy Spirit. To be fit for service it must be kept clean and pure. The enemies of the body are, gluttony, drunkenness and lust. There are many who overcome, there are those who fight hard and continue to fight as long as life lasts. No healthy man is immune from the assaults of the enemies of the body. The alternative of free will is to be wound up like a clock and arranged to run automatically for a certain length of time. Most of us prefer our freedom.

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Whether we fail or succeed we prefer a free-doom to the alternative of a machine.

Soldiers are in a more than ordinary degree exposed to the enemies of the body. The exposure, the hardships, the hard work and endurance drains the vitality. Being without the ordinary restraints of home and friends, the path to indulgence is short and easy.

The massing of men in such close contact brings into play a new psychology. Unhealthy thinking becomes easy and resistance becomes hard.

After the "push" a reaction comes, and the tendency of human nature is to unlimber and turn loose the pent-up emotions in ways that are decidedly detrimental to the body.

The worst of it is not that which falls upon the man himself. A man may claim the right to indulge his body, but he surely cannot claim the right to blight the life of a woman with his curse, and damn a child that is as yet unborn.

Before a hundred thousand diseased men are turned loose upon England—England should have something to say. If we have a duty to the soldier, we have a double duty to the coming generation. One of them is to see, as far as we can, that a child shall not come saddled with withering curse.

SOUL

The soul is that aspect of the inner man that is concerned with time and space and things. The man of the body is he who serves it at the expense of the soul and spirit. The man of the soul is what we know as "a man of the world." We usually think of him as a well-to-do person who has time and means to enjoy the world in a worldly kind of way. It applies usually as well to the man who having little means and less time, yet what little he

BODY, SOUL AND SPIRIT

possesses he uses in the same kind of way as does the well-to-do. The quality of mind is the same. They differ only in degree. The man of the soul is of a higher order than the man of the body. He runs riot in a less vulgar way. He may not be a glutton or a drunkard or man of fleshly lust. He loves a good time and spends all he has to get it. Even if he be so poor that his indulgence is a negligible quantity—still he may have the mind to do so and only falls short in the wherewithal. A man who sells roasted potatoes on the street may be a Rockefeller in his mind. The man of the soul, whether he be rich or poor, lives for a good time—or what he calls a good time. He may not be a slave to the body, but he is a slave to an idea and an erroneous idea that to seize the pleasure of the passing hour is the supreme purpose of life. The other extreme is the puritan who eschews all pleasure because it is pleasant. There was a time when the Puritan did his utmost to abolish beauty because it gave pleasure. Macaulay tells us that the Puritans objected to bear-baiting, not because it hurt the bears, but because it gave the spectators pleasure.

Balance is the quintessential thing in life. There are pleasures of the body and pleasures of the soul that are ennobling, refining and good. The happy medium is the thing to strive for.

SPIRIT

The body is the temple, the soul the caretaker and the spirit is the honoured guest.

The soul is concerned with time. The spirit is concerned with eternity and God. It is that phase of the inner man that looks out beyond the body—beyond the things of the world and concerns itself with “the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen.”

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As distinguished from both body and soul, the function of the spirit is to search for truth, goodness and beauty ; and what it finds in the higher realm it must hold. In the search for truth it comes in contact with the spirit of truth.

It will not imprison the body to save the soul, nor the soul to save the body. It will find freedom for all there, because it will find God.

The man of the spirit will mind the things of the spirit and control the activities of the body and the soul. Unless he does that, life is without purpose. Life to be worth living must be positive. It must be driving at something—to drift is death, and the drifting spirit ultimately becomes a derelict on the surface of the waters. Jesus said : “ I am the way and the truth and the life.” When the spirit comes in contact with His spirit it becomes conscious of its value and function and destiny !

Dublin.

GET SOMETHING TO DRIVE AT !

COMRADES :

You have one form of wealth that money cannot buy : Youth. It is so common to you that it loses its significance. I want to help you to a fuller consciousness of its importance. As you look out into the future you see but dimly an unknown country. As you look back you remember particularly the failures, and you feel sure it might and ought to have been different.

A great English writer made a statement once that made a profound impression upon my mind. “ It is not what you do that matters,” he said ; “ *it is what you may become.*” Each life is full of episodes and crises. But in each life there is a *trend*, and it is the trend of

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life that counts. A man may make a break and recover, he may fall and rise again. He may do this many times, and at the same time have a goal in mind which he is continually striving to reach.

The best aid I know to the striving life is to have a definite purpose in view. The most fascinating aspect of biography to me is the way men overcame difficulties. I notice, too, in the lives of all men and women who ever accomplished anything that, when they strove to attain a definite object, the difficulties seemed small and insignificant to the joy of progress and the sense of attainment. Many of them used the failures as stepping stones in their climb upward.

Many of you may not have given the future much thought. And now that you are mobilized for a certain work and for an indefinite period, you are prone, I am afraid, to postpone all personal purpose and aim to a still more indefinite future.

If the fixture in your mind of a personal purpose would militate in the least against the terrific job in hand, I would not make the suggestion. I know, however, that the opposite is true. It will be considerable help in your present work.

Abraham Lincoln once saw a slave auctioned off to the highest bidder. He was so filled with a sense of indignation that, as he stood there, he made a resolution that if he ever got a chance he would hit the slave traffic a terrific blow.

The resolution was the first step. It coloured his life. He hit it so hard that he abolished slavery for ever, on the American continent. The distance between the slave block and the White House was long. It was a rocky road, but all the time he knew where the journey led him.

The same sort of idea dominated the life of William Wilberforce. There were vested interests, he fought

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them; there was intense Parliamentary opposition, he overcame it. Lincoln and Wilberforce were both opposed, hated and feared, but they triumphed and are now amongst the immortals of the race.

Slaveries are not all dead. There are unpopular causes now crying out for the same sort of courage.

The England of to-morrow will need you. Whether you can be used is a question for you. You must have an ideal, it must shape your life. If you have no ideal, get one. Ideals are the things that distinguish us from animals, they sharpen our intellect, they teach us the use of time and opportunity, they make life worth living.

Youth is the foundation. You have laid that. Now start on the superstructure. Get a purpose and go in with all the power of your spirit for its realization. Let it be a high purpose—a noble and exalted resolution!

“Scoop down yon beetling mountain,
And raze that jutting cape;
A world is on your anvil,
Now smite it into shape!”

*Pembroke Dock,
South Wales.*

IX

TOMMY ATKINS TO HIS OFFICERS

(A talk delivered to the officers of a division.)

GENTLEMEN :

Permit me by way of introduction to say that I am not unacquainted with the life of a soldier. I wore the uniform of a soldier of Queen Victoria, and a generation ago did my bit in Egypt, when Gordon was in Khartoum. Kitchener on that picnic was our Captain of Transport, and had his headquarters at Suakin.

Instead of the ordinary perfunctory address, permit me to arise from the dead, as it were, and speak to you as the thing I was then : Tommy Atkins.

I have borrowed a language for the occasion. The one I use on ordinary occasions is good enough for me, but it does not always suit you, any more than yours suits me. What mine lacks in grammar yours usually makes up in picturesqueness. Circumlocution is a sin of which we are both guiltless. My knowledge of history is rather limited, but I think it was Napoleon who said that if he had British soldiers and French commanders he could defy the world. Well, I've faced Von Kluck and the best that Hindenburg could send over, and I know something of French commanders, and just between ourselves—*You* for me—every time !

There's no sugar on that. It's just how it strikes me.

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There are two good reasons why I prefer you. One of them is because I am persuaded you know the game. And the second is because I am equally persuaded that, as far as the men under you are concerned, you play it fair. That does not mean that you are perfect. You have your faults, and we are as well acquainted with them as you are with ours. We are reminded with more or less vigour of ours every day, and it's only in this no man's land of make-believe that I am permitted, half in fun and wholly in earnest, to remind you of yours.

First of all, some of your ideas of discipline are in need of repair. Discipline to me is that concrete abstraction without which there could be no such a thing as an army! You give the order and I obey, whether you are right or wrong. You are supposed to know. I am not. That law holds water ninety-nine cases out of every hundred. How to secure that discipline and keep it up when you get it is your job. Yet, as I am the thing you have to work on, let me say this: When you give an order as if you desired to make me afraid of you, you are barking up the wrong tree. If ever I feel red rebellion stirring my blood, it's when I believe or imagine that to be your intent. I would like, therefore, to drive it home to you that for a kindly word I will do a hundred times more and a hundred times better work than for a surly, snarling order. I am speaking of exceptions, not rules. What we are all striving for, is a discipline that secures a perfect unity of action—the greatest and best possible work with the least amount of friction. Then let me submit to you, Gentlemen, that the end we all seek can be obtained better by kindness than by browbeating or surliness.

If I happen, as I often do, to be tried by court-martial—I don't mind the fact particularly that I am deprived of the common law of civilized nations, which says that a man shall be tried by a jury of his peers, but I do

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mind standing as rigid as a gas pipe and made to stare at a pickle advertisement all the time I am on the mat. It befuddles me and fills me with cussedness.

If I meet any of you gentlemen sixteen times between Trafalgar Square and the Horse Guards, be kind enough to excuse about fifteen of the salutes I am supposed to give—I am not in London for physical exercise any more than you are! That applies particularly to young gentlemen upon whose shoulders a star has but recently fallen! Don't mistake the star for a moon or the sun!

When you are persuaded that I know how to move and act as a soldier, don't be afraid to give me a week-end leave of absence. The hours I spend with my family are as precious to me as the hours you spend with yours are to you and—and—the uncertainty of the game forces us all to look upon them as the *last hours*.

Don't drill us in the rain when you can avoid it. It's not only a useless waste of spirit, but it's a waste of men. We need all we have of both. If circumstances force you to do these things, let us know, and our benediction will go where it belongs and we will understand you. Keep in mind we are not on the old army plan with regard to time. We are here for death or the duration of the war, and the better the understanding the more mutual will be our co-operation and the better fighters we will make.

Don't swear at us. It lowers you in our estimation, and it doesn't help the situation. Profanity is one of our own peculiar failings, and when you swear at us we are confirmed in it. Besides, it is vulgar and ungentlemanly.

It must be common knowledge to you that many of us spend what little money we get in stuff that befuddles our brains and we frequent places that destroy our souls. There are plenty of meetings around to offset that, and there are chaplains who are supposed to be

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experts in dealing with it. But those of us who need it most have least to do with the agencies of prevention—which don't prevent.

If you, as an officer, would take some of us aside and show your interest by kindly worded advice, you could do more good for the morals of your regiment than all the preachers in the division!

It's part of your business to keep us out of hospital—well, why not do something toward keeping us out of hell?

When we go to France we go to fight. Don't carry over there the parade ground punctiliousness. The man who invented the collar to our khaki tunics should have been shot. It is bad and uncomfortable. The necks of fighting men should be free. You are pretty comfortable yourselves. Well, when you see the top button-hole open, do as Nelson did—turn your blind eye on it.

Finally, we common soldiers, known as Tommy Atkins, respectfully say to you gentlemen that we look to you as models of manliness, courtesy and courage. We want to work with you without friction. We want to follow where you lead, in morals as well as in military matters. We want to have such an opinion of you during this war that, when the sword is sheathed and the world is again at peace, we would die for you as readily in civil life as we would while we wear the uniform of the King! I personally want you to lead such a life in front of me that if you fall I would steal away in the dead of night, when no eye but God's could see me, and with tears in my eyes lay a flower on your grave!

X

RELIGIOUS DIFFICULTIES

COMRADES :

When a man asks you if you believe the Bible, you are face to face with the first of a long procession of difficulties. Of course the tone in which he asks the question will have an important bearing on the answer. He may have a theological chip on his shoulder, and his question may be a challenge to you to blow it off. If you say "yes," you are still in difficulty. If you say "no," you are just as badly off. You might say "yes and no," and be nearer the truth than by giving either a negative or a positive answer. Of one thing you may be very sure: the man who asks such a question knows very little about the Bible himself. For instance: If you point out to him the fact that in John III. 22 we are informed that Jesus baptized, in the land of Judea, and in John IV. 2 we are told that He baptized not, he gets around the difficulty by telling you that he believes both. He calls that faith. There is a type of faith which exults in believing that two and two make five.

Evidently John, in the last passage quoted, is correcting his own mistake. Your questioner will not admit that any Bible writer could make a mistake, for to him the writers were all divine stenographers taking dictation.

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Spurgeon described this type of theologian when he said they dragged a tadpole around the town, trying to make people believe it was an elephant !

The Bible is a library of books, produced during the long centuries of the history of the Jews. Half of it, or the New Testament, covered a much shorter period. We are more concerned with the four Gospels and the Epistles of Paul than we are with the history of the Jews. Dating the death of Jesus as A.D. 30, it was at least thirty years, after that event, before the first of the four Gospels was written, and at least sixty years before the last (John) was written. What each of them did was to commit to writing what men remembered about Jesus—plus what they remembered themselves and the relative importance they attached to what should be written and what should remain as tradition.

None of the originals exist. We have copies, codexes, manuscripts, versions in so many varieties and languages that the subject, even apart from the philosophy or theology they contain, has become a science by itself.

The knowledge of the development of the English Bible alone requires a standard of scholarship that comparatively few people possess.

The Bible is full of difficulties—full of things not only “hard to be understood,” but things which to the average mind are inexplicable.

But the difficulty of understanding the Bible is small compared to the difficulty of comprehending why Christians should kill each other by the hundreds of thousands over mere matters of interpretation—questions of unessential detail !

What shall we do with the difficulties ? I heard a story once about a preacher who dined with a noted sceptic, who was a rich man. The fish provided for dinner was shad, and the preacher was very fond of it.

RELIGIOUS DIFFICULTIES

"Mr. Jones," said the host, "how do you account for the difficulties of the Bible?"

"I don't account for them, sir; I'm not obliged to do so, thanks be to God!"

"What do you do with them?"

"Well, sir, here in front of me is a plate of shad. I am very fond of shad, but, alas, shad seems to have more bones than any other fish. Now, when I come to a bone I just put it on the side of my plate. I'm not foolish enough to let them choke me or bother me—I just put them aside and go on eating shad!"

I like a preacher like that. He had a sense of humour and an extra allowance of the rarest thing in the world—good common sense!

There are bones enough in the Bible to choke an elephant—but only an elephant would be foolish enough to let them choke him!

There is shad in the Bible, plenty of it. There is plenty in the Old Testament, plenty in the New.

The critics may go on fighting about the canon and criticism of the Old Testament until, like the Kilkenny cats, there is nothing left but the tails—but the man who wants soul comfort can find it; there is still left that which is a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path.

To every difficulty in the Old Testament there are ten in the New. The miraculous birth, the belief in demons, the miracles, the resurrection—all these are vigorously disputed. They are all difficulties, but they are not insuperable.

If the man who disputes all these things will write them in one column, I will write in a parallel column these facts: Jesus taught us the immanence of God. He taught us to look to Him as our Father. From Him we have learned how to pray, how to live a life acceptable to God, how to love God and our neighbour. He

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defended the poor and the outcast. He loved little children. He was the friend of sinners. He told stories of matchless beauty, and in them we find the way to the inner and higher life. I can grant my sceptical friend all he objects to, and still have left the fact that, to the soul of man, He was "the way, the truth and the life."

If the man with the tadpole wants me to differentiate, and explain, and take my stand in one school as against another in these pin-point theological controversies, I beg to be excused—life is too short. I prefer to dispense with a few of my faculties and accept his tadpole as an elephant!

Furthermore, I prefer the standpoint of Atheist, Agnostic or Sceptic to the standpoint of the man who accepts the whole of orthodoxy and yet is unkind, unforgiving, ungenerous, unloving, and who earns his living by speculating upon the blood of the poor!

The greatest of all religious difficulties is saying one thing and doing another. The man who will search his heart and make up his mind what the will of God is, will find few difficulties anywhere. He shall know the truth, and the truth will break the shackles on his fettered soul.

Richmond, Yorks.

XI

A TEST OF CHRISTIAN CHARACTER

(A Talk to Workers among Soldiers.)

WE find it difficult to reconcile much in modern civilization with the teachings of Jesus. We daily practise much that He disavowed. We are accustomed to it, and as all of us are equally guilty, in many points we pass it by, with nothing more than a mental reservation.

We cannot pass everything by with equal facility. There are some things so diametrically opposite to His teaching, and so fundamentally subversive of the character that we call Christian, that they call for special attention. There are many tests of Christian character. I will speak of one. It is *the spirit of forgiveness*.

Jesus found this spirit almost unknown in his day. He made it part—and a major part—of His teaching. It became a fundamental tenet in His religion. It is as rare to-day as it was nineteen centuries ago.

When the Jews had heard much of His doctrine, they asked Him how often he would advise them to forgive a brother who had sinned against them, or against the law, or against God. They imagined seven times a generous maximum.

“Not seven, but seventy times seven,” said the Great Forgiver. It was so far beyond them that it seemed impossible of application to practical affairs.

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In our day we have as many excuses as the Jews had. They had their system of casuistry by which they could circumvent the law. We in our day do not try to get round the doctrine, we go through it rough-shod. We are told that as nations we cannot forgive—that the doctrine was meant for individuals. But where is the individual who takes it seriously? Before we reach even the beggarly standard of the Jews, we not only judge him, but we hale him before a judge who can administer punishment.

Do not misunderstand me. I am not asking you to dispense with legal process. I may not believe the process to be Christian, but I am not advising you to follow my example. I will speak of the question as it relates to a brother who has not stolen your property—your ox or your ass or your wife, but simply as it applies to one who has fallen through weakness of will or through extraordinary circumstances.

On the face of it that would appear to be easy. I venture to say it is rare—very rare, and I think it is the common experience of mankind that the spirit of forgiveness is as rare among Christians as it is amongst people with no such pretensions. Jesus told the Pharisees that the publicans and harlots would enter the Kingdom of Heaven before them, and if He were here to-day, He might say the same of us. The same divine authority forbids us to judge. Why? Because before we can judge of a moral action we must know the background of it, the motive of it, and the atmosphere which surrounds it. Even when we know all that, we are warned that only the All Wise knows all. It is our business if we call ourselves by His name to forgive not seven times, but, if necessary, four hundred and ninety times. Who does it? Who is equal to it? The man who has the spirit of Christ.

The man who finds himself unequal to such a demand

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has as many excuses as any Pharisee ever had. In trying to distinguish between one immoral action and another, in such a way that he himself escapes, he tells us that "two blacks do not make one white." He draws an illustration from something he knows nothing about. It is true that two immoral acts do not make one moral act. But to revert to the platitude! Black and white, of all the colours of the spectrum, are the most uninteresting. Between them we find all the most beautiful colours of the world of nature. It is the same in the moral spectrum. The merely good man, and the merely bad man, are equally uninteresting. The man who succeeds in merely keeping out of jail or of holding a sinecure in religion or philanthropy has no monopoly either of the ethics, or the religion of Jesus. He thinks he has, but the claim is not valid. The world is full of inefficient goodness and it is an insipid thing. What the world needs is not particularly men who are good, but men who are good for something.

On the other hand the man we call "bad" may be an interesting man and the total sum of his goodness may be greater than that of the men we call "good." To be a first-class sinner requires a capacity that few men possess. We may be wrong, but most of us prefer a red-blooded sinner to the religion of Uriah Heep. I do not plead for either extreme, but for the exercise of the spirit of forgiveness all along the line.

The longer I live the more I want to know of great sinners and great sufferers. From these two classes have come all the great saints! The great sinners are men and women of great capacity. Their sin is misdirected energy. David is the greatest rake in Bible history, but for a million years to come the human race will sing his wonderful Psalms. They were hammered out on the anvil of experience. When he directed his energy toward God he rose to heights impossible to the good man

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of no capacity. "As greater candles give the greater light," says Bunyan, "so grace in greatest sinners shines most bright."

God is said to be so pure that His eyes cannot behold iniquity. It is His function alone to forgive sin, but if He forgives so bountifully, and the same was so characteristic of Jesus, it necessarily follows that the will to forgive becomes a test of Christian character.

Why are we so brutal to the erring, and the brother who occasionally falls from grace? Why do we thrust them from us? When we do manifest something of the spirit of Christ we humiliate them, we catalogue them, we tell the story of our alleged magnanimity, and we take up collections, and write lurid reports, to get more collections to keep on humiliating them.

What have we done with the command: "Let not your right hand know what your left doeth?" When we invite a hundred wounded soldiers to take tea why do we tell them that we do it because we are Christians? I have heard it done and I was ashamed. Anybody ought to be ashamed.

I am not concerned how well a man preaches, how reverently he prays or how good a commentator he is. The fact that a man is a Christian leader is of little importance. What I want to know is whether you have the spirit of Christ—whether you are large enough, spiritual enough, like Christ enough, to forgive as He forgave—your brother! That is the thing that counts. All else is comparatively unimportant.

Religion makes a fundamental change in the human heart. When that change is a mere profession and untranslated into action, the world at large is justified in its belief that the change has not taken place. The world knows that Christians can drive as hard a bargain in the marts of trade as a pagan can. It knows that back of the liquor traffic, and occasionally back of worse traffic,

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there are prominent Christians who profit by them. They overlook that, but what they will not overlook is the absence of the spirit of toleration—the will to forgive.

Abraham Lincoln said: “You can fool some of the people all of the time, and all of the people some of the time; but you can’t fool all of the people all of the time!” Even if we could, we can’t fool God.

The essentially Christian doctrine of forgiveness, largeness of soul, magnanimity of spirit, has a special application to our work among soldiers. The soldier is subjected to extraordinary temptations, his work is exacting, his sacrifices are great. Let us not be so stupid as to think that he is blind to our superior airs and unconscious of the hidden strings we attach to what we do for him. We are not his judges. We are his friends.

Perhaps we forgive him, but do we forgive those from whom we do not derive our reputations? Have we the spirit in large enough measure?

We are talking and writing about a revival. Where do we expect it to begin?

I venture to say that as soon as the world sees a man or a few men who remind them of Jesus the revival will begin—not till then!

XII

MISSING THE MARK

I WAS out in the woods with a four-year-old boy of mine once. We stood in a grove of pine trees, through which we suddenly saw one of the most glorious sunsets I have ever seen. I was awestruck, but I had no idea that a boy of tender years could experience such an emotion. He looked at it in silence for a few minutes, then he asked me a question. I do not remember ever having been so startled by a question. It was a man's question—a question that philosophers and thinkers have asked throughout the ages.

“Father,” he said, “what is sin?”

I pretended to be too engrossed to answer. I was conscious that he was not looking at me, but at the gorgeous colours in the sky, when he spoke. What a strange question to arise out of beauty?

I thought at once of a passage in Isaiah where the prophet becomes conscious of sin :

“Woe is me ! I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips.”

Then he tells of the origin of the consciousness :

“For mine eyes have seen the King—the Lord of Hosts.”

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How strange ! In a vision in the temple, while meditating, he saw the beauty, the good, the kindness of Jehovah, and the first effect of it is that he discovers there is no beauty, no holiness in himself, nor in his people.

I did not answer the lad's question at once. I begged to be excused and promised him that we should come out to the same spot on the following day, and at the same hour I would answer his question.

Never in all my life have I taken so much time and trouble to answer a question.

I went next morning early to the city. I went to the largest shop in the city of New York. I purchased a whole outfit of archery—a fine large target with red, blue, white, and gold rings, in brilliant colours—a sheaf of arrows and a bow. An hour before the appointed time, I went to the pine grove. I set up the target and arranged the bow and arrows. When all was ready I went for the lad. We went through the woods hand in hand. He had forgotten all about the question and I did not mention it. I had arranged the target so that we should come upon it suddenly. The sun was shining on it, and it was the kind of surprise that thrills the heart of a child.

When he saw it, a torrent of questions poured out, as quickly as they could find utterance.

"Never mind where it came from," I said, "let us have a few shots at it !"

He examined the target. He handled affectionately the bow. His interest was intense—so was mine.

"Look here, old man," I said, "I will let you shoot at it all afternoon, if you like, but there is something you must do for me, before we begin. I want you to learn one word—learn how to pronounce it and know its meaning.

"While you are shooting, I will be the marker, and call

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out the score. When I am shooting, I want you to call out the score. In old Greece when they played at this game, the marker had a word that he shouted out, every time the arrow missed the target. We will use that word as the Greeks used it. We will just imagine that we are Greeks for the afternoon.

"The word is *HAMARTIA*." He pronounced it half a dozen times, and was impatient to begin. I let him shoot first. Every time he missed the target I shouted out at the top of my voice "*Hamartia!*"

When he became marker, I purposely missed in order to try him. He was timid at first. I missed again, and told him to shout out the word. He laughed and shouted. I hit it. I hit it again, then I missed, and this time he yelled the word. It was great fun—great sport. Ah, with what tender emotion my memory carries me back to that scene! How often has that voice rung in my ears when I myself have blundered and missed the mark!

When it was over—and it was over when he became so tired that he couldn't sufficiently bend the bow—we sat down on the dry pine needles, and I explained.

"You asked me yesterday what sin was—do you remember?"

"Yes, Father."

"Well, I have given you the answer. Sin is missing the mark!"

I need not carry the story further. What is the mark?

Paul in his Epistle to the Philippians says: "This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

He hasn't fully attained. It doesn't help to keep thinking of past failures. He pursues, he presses and pushes on for the prize!

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Paul's prize was his calling—his high calling! What is yours? The mark is our highest conception of life. It may be high. It may be low, but when we aim high, and hit low, we miss the mark.

Sin is not a mere negation or a catalogue of negations. It is low aiming! Low aiming means poor shooting. Aim high, lads, and struggle to be marksmen in life. Be a good shot at a fact, as well as a marksman in musketry.

Ireland.

XIII

“ THE ONLY WAY ”

THERE was a dearth of labour in the Southern States some years ago and the capitalists resorted to some desperate expedients. Men were decoyed from the great cities by false promises. When they arrived at the lumber camps and mines, they found that the pay was about one-third of the amount named in their contracts. The labour fields were far from towns or cities and sometimes untouched by railroads. Some men revolted and fled. Many of them were chased with bloodhounds and brought back to the camps, where they were flogged. A small news item in a newspaper attracted my attention. I offered my services to a New York magazine and arrayed in a red beard, a suit of navvy's clothes, I went in search of a job. I was hired and sent to the scene of a number of brutal outrages.

After learning all that was of interest to me, I made my escape and became a sort of labour free-lance, going from one place to another in mines and camps, working at each place only long enough to get the news value, and take photographs.

In my wanderings I heard of a notorious stockade—a penal institution in the State of Alabama.

It was a large group of wooden, whitewashed shacks, built around the mouth of a coal mine—and owned by one of the richest corporations in America.

“THE ONLY WAY”

It took considerable mental manœuvring to gain admission. I couldn't fully reveal my object, even to the chaplain, but I revealed enough to persuade him that I could help him.

He had a night school three nights a week. I volunteered to teach. There were eight hundred black men and two hundred white. It is about four times easier for a black man to get into jail, than it is for a white man—in Alabama.

I was teaching a black man how to write his name, one night, when he delivered himself of a burden that lay heavy on his heart. He pointed to a tall white man, who stood at the other end of the shack, and told me a story.

“Boss,” he said to me, “ah've done bin yere twenty year nigh on an' dat white man he's bin yere six. Fur five year, Boss, dat big man wuz like Jesus to us niggers an' white folks too—he sure was, Boss—den somethin' done gone come over him an' he don't say nothin'; he don't do nothing, fur nigh on a year now. If ye kin sort o' shake him up or revival him ye'd do us all good, Boss, niggers and white folks too!”

To “revival” the big man was more of a task than the poor negro had any idea of. Of course I was interested at once. I tried to get acquainted and failed. He was reticent, and answered questions in a “yes” and “no” sort of fashion which was a notice of motion that I was an intruder and unwelcome.

My original purpose was almost lost sight of. I was absorbed in this strange, silent convict. Finally I told him what I was doing, where I had been, what I had seen and what I hoped to do with the information. He thoroughly understood that his case could have no bearing on what I was after.

Ten days after my introduction he told me his story. “I shot a man in front of a bar one night,” he said. “You see, we all carry revolvers down here, and we are too free

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in their use. Some hot words passed and he drew on me. I got him first and dropped him on the floor, dead. I walked down to the police station and told them what I had done. When the trial came off I refused to employ a lawyer. I told the judge that while I bore the man no malice I had brutally, in a moment of passion, taken his life, and that I ought to take whatever was coming to me, without complaint. That, as you know, was an unusual stand to take. I had been doing some hard thinking. I had noticed that when men drove a coach and four through the law, they usually moved heaven and earth to escape the responsibility of their act. I think that is the attitude of a coward. Even though my life was at stake I resolved to strike a different key. I told the judge I was guilty, and all the lawyers on earth could not change the fact.

“The jury found me guilty, of course, and the judge sentenced me to twenty years in this vestibule of hell. Well, I came here. For five years I worked hard. I pulled out five tons of coal six days a week. I was helpful to the men around me. I was a jack of all trades to them. Somehow, I seemed to just hit it about right with everybody—except the warden. He got a grouch on about me. Whenever the niggers said kind things about me, he would cuff their ears. He got worse instead of better.

“You’ve seen him flog men at supper time—well, one night, to my surprise, he called my name. ‘What have I done, Warden?’ I asked.

“‘You had a black stone in your coal!’

“‘Warden,’ I said, ‘you know me. I’ve been here five years. I’ve played the game fair. You know that if I had a stone in my coal I would pull out a ton for it.’

“‘Shut up,’ he said, ‘or I’ll give you fifty on the naked!’

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“ ‘Warden, I will not shut up, if you give me five hundred ! You lie and you know you lie ! ’

“ Well, I got fifty lashes on the naked back. About the thirtieth stroke I writhed a little, and he put a nigger on my legs, and another on my shoulders ! Now, there’s more truth than poetry in the statement that we have nigger on the brain down here, but we’re born that way. Only a Kentuckian can feel the blood in his veins run like molten lead, when a nigger is thrown on his body, while a brute cuts it in ribbons.

“ I got up, another man. I had never known what hate was until that minute. I arose to my feet hating civilization, the land of my birth, the human race ! I hated the warden with an implacable hatred, and I made up my mind what to do.

“ There was just the barest possibility that a stone had been found in my coal—but I believed in my heart that he flogged me because the men loved me.”

Half an hour after he told me the story he outlined a plan he had had in his mind for over a year. He took my hand and put it inside his convict’s jacket.

“ Do you feel anything ? ” he asked.

“ Yes—I feel a stiletto.”

He looked at me with his steel-grey eyes, calm and deliberate. “ The next time he, or any other man, lays a hand on me, I shall drive that into his heart. He shall never know what struck him ! ”

Taking him as he had been pictured to me by others ; as I had heard the story from his own lips, and looking at him in his strength, and in his weakness, I profoundly felt that I was in the presence of a strong, fine man, who, with all his limitations, was a stronger and better man than I was.

Every time I visited the prison, I spent most of my time there, with this man, whom I will call Webster. I was ever at a loss for words. Often they died on my

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lips unspoken. We became friends. Our lives were laid bare to each other. I could not wholly neglect the work I had gone down there to do. I was to say farewell in an address to the entire contingent of convicts on a Sunday morning. I told the story of Sidney Carton. Of his unselfish love for Lucy Manette, his going to Paris, worming himself into the cell in the Bastille where Lucy's husband was confined. How he chloroformed Darnay, exchanged clothes with him, and then called for the turnkey to carry him out.

I used the dramatized form, and described the morning of the execution. How Carton—as Darnay—was no longer the drunken loungeur. His eyes full orbéd—his voice steady and clear. He was now on the eve of the great sacrifice.

Mimi, the little girl who used to clean his office—when he had one—is there. She bears toward him the same god-like, unselfish love that he bore toward Lucy Manette. How he kissed her, and consoled her, and said as he led her toward the guillotine: “I am the resurrection and the life, he that believeth on me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.”

Then, as his own turn comes, he stands for a moment on the steps of the ladder, and looking back into the dungeon says: “‘It’s a far, far better thing that I do than I have ever done. It’s a far, far better rest to which I go than I have ever known.’”

A follower of the Christ. An exemplification of the words: “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.”

I did not see Webster after the meeting. The warden had put him out of the way, but I had seen him in the audience, looking at me, with an almost expressionless face.

A few days later, I went back to have a final personal word with him. As I left, he gave me a small package.

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On it was pencilled these words: “Not to be opened until you reach home.”

My next exploit was in a forest away off from the populous centres and miles from a railroad. Men had been flogged there, and conditions were worse than in any other camp in the South. In a few days I knew all I wanted to know. Then a terrible sense of loneliness overcame me. A sort of homesickness, but infinitely more tense and morbid. I had to be careful. Life was too precious to simply throw away, and a false move might deprive me of it.

One night—the night before I left, the dull, morbid feeling came over me, and as I sat on a pine log I thought of Webster’s package. He had carved something, and as a memento it would give me comfort. I opened the package and inside I found that stiletto, the blade smashed off close to the handle and around it a piece of paper, and on the paper these words:

“ ‘It’s a far, far better thing that I do than I have ever done. It’s a far, far better place than I have ever known.

“GEORGE WEBSTER.”

Blandford, Dorset.

list

XIV

THE MASTER AND HIS FRIENDS

COMRADES :

I want to talk to you to-night about the Master. I want to try to give an outline, or, as an artist draws a sketch in crayon before he applies paint to the canvas, I want to draw a sketch in words.

How strange it is that the human mind—any mind should become surfeited with the sweetest name on mortal tongue ! Yet it is true. Why is it true ? What is the cause of it ? Stranger still is it that men should use that name in the form of an oath and besmear it with vulgarity and drag it in the slime of filthy thought. That also is true.

My guess at the riddle may be only a guess ; I claim for it nothing more. It is something to be deplored, something to be remedied if we can.

Constant repetition and reiteration has something to do with it. Familiarity breeds contempt even in the most sacred things. The Jews recognized this long ago, and ceased in a large measure to pronounce the name of Jehovah. They coined a substitute for it. They called him Adonai. That alone does not account for it. In reiteration there enters another element which helps to produce the baneful effect. That other element is personality. When we hear a person who is

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empty-headed and empty-hearted pronounce the name, we instantly weigh the speaker and the thing he says. Our judgments may not always be correct, but they have their influence. The name he pronounces is heavy, the personality behind the word is light.

If you put the man in one scale and the word he pronounces in another, the name goes down, the man goes up. It is not a matter of refinement or education or elocution—it is a matter of the spirit.

Christian propagandists are not always wise—they are not always philosophers. I venture to say that one of the causes of the surfeit is the weakness of personality behind the spoken word.

The flippant, arrogant, careless and constant repetition of the sacred name of Jesus produces in the average mind an opposite effect to the one desired. Few see this, for few think. To hear some evangelists pronounce that name, often sends a shiver through me. That is because I instinctively feel that the name is used without any depth of reverence, or profound feeling, any genuineness of personality. The average man may have none of these himself, but he is a candidate for them, and when he feels that the speaker himself is bereft of them he loses confidence, he abandons hope. Now to my sketch: "What a piece of work is man," says Shakespeare, "how noble in reason, how infinite in faculty! in form and moving how express and admirable! in action how like an angel! in apprehension like a god!"

To that height man may rise. In that height and beyond stood the Master.

I am attracted by His manliness. The value and quality of a man can only be revealed in a crisis. He had many of them. He was opposed by all the political, economic and religious forces of his day. Once he turned loose his anger. They had turned the temple

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into the market place for barter and exchange. Physically, He went after them and cleaned them out. Outside of this incident He was calm. In bodily suffering, He experienced the limit. He never became oblivious to the physical suffering of others, but He taught the higher law—the supremacy of the spirit over matter.

He had a genius for friendship. He took men into His confidence. He knew they would abuse it, but He took them in. When they betrayed Him He took them back—if they so desired.

He had an extraordinary affection. He took in men and women and little children. More than that—His affection was shown to the best advantage when given to publicans, harlots, lepers and the riff-raff for whom nobody else cared. To love the unlovely is a test under which most of us break down. His affection for folks of all kinds took Him to festal gatherings, weddings, etc. The religious critics called Him “gluttonous and a wine bibber.” He dined with Pharisees as well as sinners. There were no special strings attached to His affection. He cast it broadcast. Whoever could appreciate His spirit might partake of His affection.

He was the prophet and champion of the poor. He was the spokesman of Am-ha-aritz—the people of the earth, earthy. His vocabulary is full of words that denote intimate knowledge of their life. He speaks of hunger, prisons, debtors, judges; of labourers and wages. He said: “I was hungry and ye gave me meat, I was thirsty and ye gave me drink, I was naked and ye clothed me.” To the rich He said: “Sell that thou hast and give to the poor.” He taught their youth, He loved their little children, He ate at their houses and was at home in their midst. His attitude was no mere intellectual concept. It was a moral activity. He gave

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himself to the sick and suffering. He healed them, consoled them, inspired them and gave them hope.

He was the great discoverer of personality. Through the mists of outward appearances He saw the inner realities. He saw the good in men and women, and brought it out. He revealed them to themselves. He saw what others could not see. If He were here to-night He would lay His hand on some shoulder, and tell you to be true to what was biggest and best in you.

He was in daily contact with the people. He was no cloistered monk, nor exclusive priest, nor of superior caste. He had no pulpit—save the roadside, or the fields, or the quiet woods to which the people followed Him.

He was a lover of nature. He spoke of birds and flowers and trees. The grass of the fields and the common sparrow furnished Him with illustrations, with which He vividly taught the truth. He found rest on the mountain side, He loved the quiet waters of the lake. He loved the common things and whatever He touched became uncommon. Nothing was foreign to Him; He belonged to whoever needed Him, and the greater the need the greater the claim on His time, His genius, His fellowship.

He had a message for the world. He trained His disciples, taught them, inspired them. Instead of priests, or scholars, or nobles, or patriots, he selected labourers. They were rough-hewn men, callow and uncouth. His spirit refined them, educated them, enthused them. They were dumb and dull and unimportant. He touched their lips and their language burned into men's hearts like flames of fire! Out of dullness they were quickened into sons of thunder. To-day they are undistinguishable from the common mass—to-morrow they are ambassadors of a world religion. They were ignorant of many things, they were said to be unlearned and ignorant

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men. One thing they knew, they knew Him. His friendship was their credential. He produced no books. He wrote the message in these men's hearts. He founded no church; His church was a kingdom of friends, of lovers, of spirit-filled men and women and children. He built no theological fences. He opened wide a door through which men might enter and find rest for their souls. He said: "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

He brought God down out of the heavens and enthroned Him in the hearts of men. He taught them to draw nigh unto Him—to call Him "Our Father"—our Father in heaven, but also our Father on the earth. There, too, on the earth among men, was the new Kingdom.

The Master was unique—His friends were unique. His religion is unique. Neither Egypt, Greece or Rome produced anything like Him or it. His friends have made many mistakes, many blunders, but His religion still lives. The nations have not attained it fully yet. They are still striving, still groping.

Comrades, you may have doubts about His friends, you may discard their methods, disavow their creeds, but when you have done all that, you still have to settle the question of Jesus. You cannot avoid Him, you cannot evade Him.

The sketch is rough. It is a synopsis, an outline, but at least it indicates how utterly inadequate any sketch or description must necessarily be.

I invite you to complete for yourselves the portrait—not perhaps in words, but by entering into that friendship which is as open to you as it was to the fishermen of Galilee!

XV

HAIL, COLUMBIA !

COMRADES :

The President has sent his last note. The United States is at war with Germany. The world will not charge us with a hasty decision. We might have declared war when the *Lusitania* was sent to the bottom of the sea, and still could not have been charged with participation without cause. We should have protested at the violation of Belgian neutrality. We should have expressed our disgust and loathing at the savagery of German soldiers, the raping of women, the wanton and unnecessary destruction of historic buildings. We kept silent—our patience was interpreted, not as a virtue, but as a vice.

Like the British people, we had been preaching peace for a hundred years. We believed in it, at almost any price.

The Germans were busy in our midst. They spent money lavishly. They sent poets, preachers and diplomats to write at us, preach at us, and cajole us. Against that continuous and insidious propaganda the British did practically nothing. I remember presiding at a monster meeting in Carnegie Hall, New York, when Cecil Chesterton debated with the best German debater in America. Metaphorically speaking, Chesterton wiped the floor with his opponent. A few days later the

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papers announced, that the British Embassy in Washington, knew nothing about Chesterton, and disavowed all responsibility for him ! Some of us began to wonder whether German propaganda had not reached even the British Embassy !

What does the entry into war of the United States mean ? I will tell you what it means to me.

It means, first of all, moral judgment against Germany. We have watched the war for two years and six months. We have seen the violation of treaties, the ruthless and barbarous methods, the lying and scheming of Germany, and we have come to the conclusion that in the sisterhood of nations her word cannot be depended upon, and her national honour has, for the time being, been eclipsed. Our judgment on Germany is not a snap judgment. It is deliberate and calm, but it is specific and irrevocable. We want no territory, no indemnity. We have absolutely no selfish purpose to serve. We will give our wealth and our life's blood for the suppression of wrong, and for the strengthening of those moral standards of nations, which are essential to the world's welfare. It means that a nation of a hundred million people living in a land that stretches from the Atlantic, three thousand miles across to the Pacific, and from Canada to the Gulf of Mexico, have marshalled themselves in battle array, and will hurl their titanic strength against the common foe !

We can put ten millions of men in the field. We can supply new navies ; we invented the U boat, we can invent its master. We can land our troops in France in defiance of all the obstacles that the Germans can throw in the way.

We can finance and, in a large measure, feed the Allies. Germany announces to her people that we are a negligible quantity, and that before we can be felt in the struggle, her U boats will have starved England,

HAIL, COLUMBIA !

by the destruction of shipping. All right, let her boast on ! Our new form of diplomatic note will speak for us.

The Germans glory in the fact that they are a military nation. We glory in the fact that we are not. Our glory is in peace. That's why we were not ready. We don't want to be ready if preparation means what it means in Germany. We are amateurs at the fighting game, but we prefer death to servitude or dictation from a military despotism. We not only prefer that for ourselves, but we are willing to depart from our tradition of non-interference in European affairs, and come over to help other people to enjoy the same liberty.

Up to 1914 we fought the bloodiest war in human history in our own country over a principle—a war that cut out of our own body the cancer of slavery. We had nothing to gain in that war but the recognition of the negro as a citizen and a man. As a republic that for all time has dispensed with kings we come over to Europe to re-establish little Belgium as an independent monarchy ! To do the same for Serbia ! Human liberty knows no national boundaries. It is what the world wants and what the world shall have.

We are in the arena. The bugle calls—the fight is on !

Germany has announced that it will take a year for us to mobilize. She has another guess coming. I shall be much mistaken if within a few months our advanced divisions are not fighting in the fields of France under the folds of the Stars and Stripes ! With us, time is not particularly the essence of this contract. The longer the time the more sure and complete the downfall of Prussian militarism ! Gradually our fleet will spread. Gradually our armies will come. We can send 50,000 flying machines and men to man them, our forests will be sacrificed, our mines will give up their ores. Our banks will pour out their gold, our farms will send their food—in ever increasing quantities.

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The first American blood spilled on the soil of France will thrill our nation like an electric shock. I do not under-estimate the task. It is no child's play. It is a titanic struggle, but the final alignment is now made, and we can confidently take heart, and look toward the end.

Our participation in this struggle as comrades of the British, means more to me than a victory over German despotism. It means a closer union of the English-speaking peoples, and out of that closer union, there is coming some realization of the dreams we have dreamt.

The situation, though full of hope, is not unmixed with danger. We will have to take care, that the death-blow to German militarism will not give birth to a new militarism, either in England or America. That is a real danger and only eternal vigilance will keep us free from it. I have been a soldier. I am speaking to soldiers. We all know the glamour of the profession and the tendency to exalt physical force over the virtues and the arts of peace. There were no V.C.'s or D.S.O.'s in the American Civil War. I hope the American Army will not be foolish enough to copy the decoration system of either France or England. The system of decorating soldiers is one of the props of the military system. I hope we will steer clear of it, and substitute something else for it. It is not only the wrong way to do a right thing, but it causes untold heartburning and jealousy. It was enough for our soldiers to do their bit. I hope our contact with European systems, will not change our simplicity and military democracy.

In America and England we have heard and read a great deal, since the war began, about Democracy, with a capital D. The naked fact remains, that neither of us know very much about it, and as far as we do know, we seem to be very much afraid of it. A country in which half the population is continually on the edge of starvation is a long way from the democratic goal. Just

HAIL, COLUMBIA !

as a system of religion in which the chief shepherds get a salary of £15,000 a year, while the vast majority of the under shepherds live on less than a navvy, is a long removal from the life that Christ and his disciples lived.

We speak of Germany as an oligarchy, but are we quite sure that we are free from it ourselves? An oligarchy need not of necessity be centred in the House of Commons or in the House of Congress, or at Buckingham Palace or at the White House. We have in both countries little self-perpetuating juntas of individuals who wield great power financially and socially. You have an aristocracy of blood—mixed occasionally with blood of varying political colours. We have an aristocracy of money. Both have tendencies inimical to democracy, and if we would not have the Germans taunt us with hypocrisy, let us see, that, while highly specialized classes have liberty to live their own lives, their liberty ends where the slavery of a people begins. It is a time of change. Let the changes be real—not fictitious. Finally, comrades, I hope that in future we will understand each other better. Each of us will have a herculean task when this war is over. We have evils that eat at our vital life like cancers. Let us cut them out. Let us make the world, in fact, as well as in name, democratic. Let us see that the earth is made a better place, not for the few favoured ones alone, but for all—all God's children should have a freedom in a free world.

There is enough to go around many times over. I plead especially for the sediment of society—the mass at the bottom. Let us see that they have light, and air, and work, and a place to play. Self-seeking has no anniversary. We only possess that which we spend for the good of others, and he that saveth his life shall lose it, and he that loseth it in making a better world, shall find it to all eternity!

Brockton Camp, Birmingham.

XVI

WHAT LIFE MEANS TO ME

COMRADES :

Since I have been in your midst many questions have come to me about life and work and thought and religion. To-night I will just stand here awhile and think aloud. There may be no cohesion, no logical outline, no attempt to preach or deliver an address. I will tell you simply what life means to me.

I know nothing of my ancestors—whether they were good or bad, rich or poor. My parents were peasants. Their story belongs to

“ The short and simple annals of the poor.”

The world that I opened my eyes upon was a world of hungry people. In conditions over which we had no control we lived in poverty, ignorance and dirt. The dirt was social, not personal. It was the condition of millions—it is their condition now. It is a condition in which millions sink in order that a few may swim ! There was no spirit of discontent, no rebellion, no complaint. It was our lot, we took it philosophically. There may have been cowardice in acquiescence, but we were unconscious of it.

In my boyhood a vision came—came when I was in

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ragged. I awoke to the fact that I was a human being—a living, thinking spirit. Then began a terrific struggle to extricate myself—to acquire knowledge, to cultivate my soul. Step by step, inch by inch I emerged. I had a Companion. He came to me in the darkness and led me out. He became a fact to me, as much a fact as this table in front of me. As I went along to toil, over the rough, uneven roads, in the cold of winter, I talked to Him. That is the extra factor in the life of the Celt. We are idealists, we live in a land of make-believe. In poverty we build in our fertile minds a world of fancy. We are dreamers of dreams, we see visions, and what the actual world denies is made up for in the world we make in the kingdom of the mind.

While yet a hewer of wood and a drawer of water I saw relations clearly—the relation of man to man, of man to the world, and the world to God. I saw the world beautiful and I saw also sin and greed and selfishness at work. They were frustrating the designs of God, they were despoiling beauty, their poisonous breath made the world a vale of tears.

There was a world beyond me, of knowledge, of art, of beauty. I began to climb. It was a long climb over precipitous rocks and deep ravines, but the world was out there and I struggled on. I got my first instalment of that other world in the first book I read. I had arrived at the edge of manhood when I read it. The book itself was a world in miniature. There were people there and they were like myself, struggling for light and love and knowledge through labour and tears. I sold my labour—the labour of my hands—for bread and knowledge and a place in the scheme of things. The price was high, but I paid it and struggled on. I delved in the ground, I went into the black bowels of the earth and dug coal. As a slave at the wheel of labour I went from post to pillar and job to job. Whatever I did with my hands

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I added the touch of the soul. I made all men and things my teachers. The world of work was my school. Every day became a life in itself. From dawn to dark was an adventure.

My idealism did not blind me to the defects of the underworld. Mind controls matter, but down there at the bottom there is too much matter and too little mind. Nor could the mind of Paul remove a sewer without a shovel! A ghastly hovel and a pestilential atmosphere wrap themselves around a soul, like a body of death, and stifle it. Souls escape, it is true; they make the most of a bad job, but I early became imbued with the idea that it was a fundamental right of man to have air, and light, and a chance to get up, above the level of the beast!

There were times when I saw and felt the gaunt wolf of hunger at the door of the poor. I became angry and cynical. That is a mistake. It is a sheer waste. With me it was a passing phase. A sense of humour saves the day always—it is a saving grace—a gift from the gods.

Life to me became less and less a matter of years, and more and more a matter of epochs, experiences, episodes, thrills and contributions to the progress of the race. Education became to me not a matter of schools or colleges, but adjustment—the adjustment of a fish to water, a bird to the air, a flower to the sunshine and a man to the moral order of the universe. An educated man is a man who is rightly adjusted, who is in running order with the plan of things as they are. It is not mere knowledge—it is the use we make of what knowledge we have.

In the credal stage of religion my desire for truth was to glorify my sect. The more truth I knew the higher grew the walls that divided me from other sects and creeds. That also was a passing phase. The truth obtained in that way became something else—religious pride and

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sometimes a spiritual voluptuousness. A strictly sectarian atmosphere chokes the soul, limits the vision and diverts attention from the essential realities.

The search for truth for its own sake led me out of many quagmires. My zeal for one sect was transformed into sympathy for all. I was no better nor any worse—I was free. It takes time to arrive at that point. On the way there are obstacles, misunderstandings, heart-burnings and perhaps tears, but it is the only way. To worship God and serve man the soul must be free. When the soul is free it can function naturally—it can worship, it can pray.

I travelled the world and enjoyed the stopping places as I went along. Each place had its lesson, each group was a class. Whatever my hands found to do I did with all the power I possessed. I have been a soldier, sailor, miner, day labourer. There are few things in the world of the unskilled that I have not done. I enjoyed them all. I made each experience a preparation for the next. I exchanged the work of the hand for the work of the mind. I was a preacher, teacher and writer. To me labour of any kind, whether of the hand or brain, was a contribution to the workaday world. There was no such differentiation as honourable or dishonourable jobs in the world of work. Whatever is done well is honourable—whether with a pickaxe or a pen!

I have no ambitions. The world has nothing to give that I cannot get. To be content with little makes poverty equal with riches. What I prize most the world cannot take away. I have no ends to serve. I have no consuming purpose, the pursuit of which blinds me to the things that lie between.

Life to me is a road. I am a traveller. As I trudge along I find much to do. I work for bread, but I do not live by bread alone. On the road I find fellow travellers—they are oppressed, they are weary and tired [and

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heavy laden. I lend a hand. I speak the strong word for the unfortunate, the kind word to the heavy-hearted and the word of strength to the weak. I don't want to do that for a reputation—that is to miss the mark, to forgo the joy. I must do it because it is the thing to do. It is its own best reward. On the road I find the two essentials of life : a career and a living. As I move along I cannot be encumbered with much baggage. Things are baggage—thoughts are things too, and they are wealth and they are easily carried.

A few people have grabbed the land all around the road and they have monopolized the fruits of the earth and the cattle on a thousand hills. But there are more things they cannot do. They cannot shut out from my eyes the beauty of the landscape, the colour of a rainbow, the scent of the flowers, or the white, fleecy clouds that flit across a blue sky. I may still enjoy the birds and the aroma of the flowers.

I can enjoy the grandeur of the mountains, I can look out over the expanse of the sea. I can stand spellbound before a beautiful sunset without a landlord telling me by his sign-boards to get off the earth !

On the road I find strong men and women—stronger than I am, and I need their help and fellowship. They are artists and poets and thinkers and dreamers, and when I am weary and the dust of the road dulls my vision, I go to them as a disciple would go to a master and I come away inspired and strengthened and continue the journey.

On a square foot of the road I can stand and commune with the infinite ! In my pocket I can carry the poetry of the ages and the soul adventures of the mighty dead. I love the life of the road. I am as bad as the worst, as good as the best. I am in touch with all, I know all. I love the great outdoor world—the trees to me are human and the flowers are the faces of nature's children. I love human beings. I love the clash of mind with mind,

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the kinship of those who suffer and the hand-clasp of those who serve. I love the laughter of little children. I laugh with those that laugh, I mingle my tears with those who weep. To work, to think, to thrill, to suffer and endure—to do it all as part of the day's journey along the road—that is life !

To be at one with it all, part of it all, all the past, all the present and all the future—those are the things worth while !

And the Son of Man is there. He is the invisible companion of the road, the companion of all. He is there in the storm and in the sunshine. He is with those who rejoice and with those who mourn. Where He is there is no need of bell or book or priest. To the end of the road He goes and there, as we pass out, He opens a door and through it we pass into another road, and that is the road of the life that is to be !

“ Life ! We have travelled long together,
Through sunshine and through cloudy weather.
'Tis hard to part when friends are dear,
Perhaps 'twill cost a sigh, a tear—
Then steal away.

Give little warning.

Choose thine own time !

Say not : ‘ Good-night,’
But in some brighter clime,
Bid me : ‘ Good morning ! ’ ”

Milford Haven, Wales.

XVII

A CAREER AND A LIVING

COMRADES :

In discussing the relative utility of animals a wag once said : " The greatest animal is the horse and so is the cow ! "

The same may be said of a career and a living. The chief business of man is to get a living. The chief end of man is a career. To live, most of us must work. There are those who live by what is called " their wits," there are those who live by their ancestors, there are others who live by speculating on the labour of their fellow men—and women—and children. But the men in front of me belong to none of these. Before you came here you were working at some trade or calling. When you take off khaki and put on the plain clothes of a citizen, you will go back to the trades and callings from whence you came—most of you will, anyway.

The work we perform for wages or salary we call a living. Even when a clergyman goes to a new job we call it " a living." I want to make for the sake of clearness a distinction between a living and a career. One is obligatory, the other is optional. We must work ; we may blunder through life without a career. The laws of God and man are of such a nature that we have to work.

The social credit given to parasites is a sham and a

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fraud. That society ever should have showered honour on the lazy and parasitic and shame on the toiler is to society's eternal discredit. It is the eternal stain on the escutcheon of the race.

By a career I do not mean a hobby. We all have hobbies. They are personal pursuits, pursued for personal gratification. A career is whatever we do for the common good over and above that which we do for a living.

A profession or a trade may be both a career and a living, though neither is likely to be. It is a curious thing, and a sidelight on our civilization, that no man ever expects to work with his hands as a labourer or a mechanic when he has finished a college course!

Naturally, the men who work the longest hours and for the least remuneration have the least chance for a career. But the working class are by no means shut out from careers. There are countless ways in which, when the day's work is done, he may pursue a career. Reduced to its lowest terms, his career may be that he can count one in a good cause, and there are causes enough to suit every kind of taste.

There are two great causes. I want to draw your attention to them, and invite you to find a career in one or both.

I was in one of them when I was working in a coal pit for a shilling a day.

First, there is the ever-present desire within the hearts of men for a spiritual life.

Second, there is the pressing need for social reform.

A career spiritual is a matter for a man's personal examination and house-cleaning. He must set his own house in order. He cannot help others until he has helped himself.

When Jesus called men to be His disciples, He asked them to subscribe to no creed. The only creed was Himself. They joined Him. Custom, as well as conscience, hath made cowards of us all. We have

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lived amid the din and rattle of contending creeds so long that we mistake them for religion and keep apart. But beyond the controversy there is a career of the spirit for every man.

It does not help much to read a life of Christ. They are usually very dull reading, and saturated with theological motive. That's why they can be bought in second-hand book stores by the ton. They are a drug on the book market. Take the Gospel of Mark as the oldest and briefest of the four Gospels. Don't take a commentary. You can understand it better without one. Read it as you would read any other story of an unusual life. If your mind is open and your intellect undulled by inherited prejudices and superstitions, you will find out that it contains a philosophy of life that you can make your own. The way is simple and plain—he who runs may read. Nor is the mere knowledge gained enough. The knowledge gained must move the will to act. Put the matter to the test. Make spiritual experiments upon yourself. Find out whether there is anything in prayer. Religion is not something that drops from the heavens into any skull. It has to be worked out. We work out our own salvation. When we get a vision in that way, it's worth something. It is personal and we know the value of it. Reading the Bible isn't religion, nor are organs, choirs, beautiful buildings or printed prayers. They are auxiliaries, but they are not the thing itself. You can no more measure life by a book than you can measure this table with a quart measure. You must measure life by the life you find portrayed in the book. You can no more get religion by reading than you can be filled by reading a book on cookery. You can learn how. You can find out the way other men—millions—have travelled, but your spirit must come into living union with the spirit of God. That is religion.

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The phrase "social reform," like many of our religious phrases, has become stereotyped into a banality. When it is used, our minds connect it with "uplifters" or "welfare," and healthy-minded people are suspicious of all three. That is because so often the worst enemies of a good propaganda are the propagandists. The world has about finished with the "social reformer," who steals with one hand and distributes alms with the other. We are learning also that to form well obviates a thousand reforms.

Here are some of the causes that will furnish a career for the humblest man in this audience.

Education: We are just beginning to think of the education of the working classes. Hitherto it has been neglected by design. We want not only to reform the system, but to reform it so that a working man's son or daughter who can show merit shall have a chance for a college course. In no place in the British Empire is the working class worse off than in Ulster, where you will find them shouting for King and constitution! I was doing the same thing when I was a boy. I was doing it in rags and dirt and galling poverty! Never once did I connect my loyalty with my condition.

Democracy is now learning—very slowly, it is true—that the creators of all wealth have a right—a fundamental right—to a fair share of the good things of life, and one of them, and a major one, is education.

That the ancient universities should be beyond the hope of the sons of the working class is absurd. Their door should swing wide open to all who can pass the necessary examinations—without respect to creed or class distinction. After the war you must either open those doors or demand a democratic university, free and open to all. The people have earned that privilege in the past, they are doubly earning it at the present moment. The fight for new conceptions of education is a career!

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Here, then, is a field wide open for you. You can find a career in it, and you will be improving the race.

Housing: The agitation for better housing has been going on for half a century, and a beginning has been made, but only a beginning. There are reserves for deer, pheasants and rabbits. Now let us have reserves for Englishmen! A good shibboleth would be, "Englishmen versus Rabbits!"

The dull, deadening monotony of some streets in English provincial cities is one of the direct influences in deadening the spirits of men. Not a tree, not a flower, not a vista of anything beautiful! Good homes make good men. Only one-third of the men who offered themselves for military service before the war, both in England and the United States, could pass the examination! Why?

Because they had not been well fed or well housed! The habitations of working men on both sides of the Atlantic are not fit for animals. Here is another field for a career—something to drive at, aim at and accomplish. Take a hand in it. The chief obstacles are land monopoly and profits. You demonstrate what you can do on the field of battle. Here is another field of battle. Transfer your propaganda of the bullet to the propaganda of the ballot. Do it constitutionally, do it with a quickened conscience, a plain programme and a consciousness that when you are improving the race of men you are doing the work of God. I could mention a hundred other fields, but these are examples of the fields already white to the harvest and where the labourers are few.

Salisbury Plain.

XVIII

WHAT IS CHRISTIANITY ?

COMRADES :

A friend of mine, in trying to answer this all-important question, has written :

“ So many gods, so many creeds,
So many paths that wind and wind,
When just the art of being kind
Is all the sad world needs.”

That is a poet's answer. It is a poet's religion. It is not the religion of the theologians. A theologian could take that verse of poetry and make it look sad. A botanist can take a flower, and in explaining it, take petal after petal from it, until nothing remains but the bare, naked, unsightly stem. The flower is explained, but it is gone ! Its beauty is gone, its aroma is gone also. So it is with Christianity. The learned expert explains in technical terms the religion of Christ, but the more he explains the less the average mind seems to understand. We are grateful that we do not need to know the science of botany in order to appreciate a flower ; nor is it necessary to be a professor of literature to understand the human appeal of a poet. The same is true of Christianity. Theology is a science. Few know it. The multitude know it not at all. It takes a trained mind and the power of sustained attention to

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read intelligently a theological book. Few have these prerequisites. We are grateful, however, for the fact that the average mind may read the four Gospels and get adequate information about Jesus. Who He was, what He taught, and the work He accomplished in the hearts of men. The theologians all differ in their interpretation, but they are not all obscure.

Benjamin Jowett was one of the great scholars of the nineteenth century. He was a theologian and Master of Balliol.

Listen to him for a moment :

“ The true evidences of Christianity are the public evidences, the effects upon history, and upon the world, and upon the lives of men of our own time.”

That does not seem so far removed from the poetry with which I began. Other theologians might say it *was* poetry, but like the poetry, it makes a direct appeal to our reason.

Hear him further on the same topic :

“ If we could free the Christian religion from the errors which have encrusted upon it in the course of the ages ; if we could clear it of those charges which men of the world are constantly bringing against it, such as hostility to knowledge or a *doubtful regard for truth* where the interests of religion are supposed to be concerned ; if, when religion grew, morality increased in an equal measure ; and the most fervent Christians were also the most honest and upright in business, the most innocent, the most friendly, we should not read treatises on Evidence, for the lives of Christian men would be their own self-evidencing light.”

There was no greater leader in the religious thought

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in England. Yet he never made the slightest impression upon the age-long "errors" of his own creed or church. He influenced the world at large. What the outside world charges organized religion with, is not particularly "a doubtful regard for truth," but that by its cumbersome creeds and heavy ritual it has obscured the Christ !

One can see the Founder of Christianity through theological meshes about as easily as a priest can see the labour problem through a stained glass window.

Hear Professor James Stalker. He is a prominent living theologian of the Church of Scotland. He says :

"What is religion ? It could hardly be better defined than it has been by St. Peter in these words : ' We, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness ? ' Who is a Christian ? I answer, the man who, taught by Christ, looks forward not only to heaven, but to a new earth, in which righteousness shall reign, and from which all the unrighteousness of every kind with which the earth is at present disfigured shall be banished, and who, trusting in the grace of Christ, is doing his part to make that good time come."

Probably not for hundreds of years will that pronouncement be incorporated in the creeds of the church to which Dr. Stalker belongs. If he tried to put it there he would precipitate a fight, out of which he and others would emerge, mauled and defeated, if not excommunicated.

Abraham Lincoln said that as soon as he could find a church that stood simply for love of God and one's neighbour he would join it. He never joined. Millions never join for the same reason.

Take the opinion of the poet, Dr. Jowett, Dr. Stalker and Abraham Lincoln, put them together, then turn to the fifteenth chapter of Luke and read the story of the

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Prodigal Son. What did Jesus teach in that matchless parable? By the way, in the popular mind the fact that it was a parable is almost entirely lost sight of.

The reason for that is that the popular mind has had one phase of the story so thoroughly hammered into it that all other phases become insignificant. The popular evangelist or exhorter makes the entire parable turn on the awakening of the prodigal. There is another and a more important phase.

The great truths taught by Jesus were taught in the form of parables. They were simple stories of common life, told to illustrate the law of things spiritual. The parable of the lost sheep was told to illustrate the truth that God is more interested in one erring soul than in ninety-nine souls who are safe. The parable of the prodigal was told to illustrate the unchangeableness of a father's heart—the heart of our Father—God. It illustrates other things, but that is the chief thing and the thing that is usually overlooked.

What are the plain inferences to be drawn from this simple story? That God the Father looks with the tenderest compassion upon his erring children. That when we get sick of sin and living among hogs, all we have to do is to move, to make a break, cut loose, and return! That when we return we are welcome and the best in the Father's house is none too good for us. That when we return He will not remind us of the swine episode.

If Jesus had been a theologian he would have packed the parable so full of doctrines that it would have been as little understood as the thirty-nine articles or the Westminster confession of faith!

According to Luke, Jesus told the parable of the prodigal and the parable of the unjust steward together. Just before he began the Pharisees accused him of eating with sinners, and when He finished they snarled at Him like a pack of wolves. Probably the truth was too

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obvious or the parables too simple. They may have thought that Jesus was making it too easy to enter the Kingdom of God. No modern Pharisee is saying that, but he might as well. The grips, signs and passwords of the thirty-three degrees of masonry are easy to master and remember compared to the thirty-three hundred hair-splitting tenets of the modern organized custodians of the truth. This is one of the reasons why the modern church fails to reach the people.

Christianity is a bigger thing than any church or all the churches combined. The church is exclusive. The Kingdom of God is inclusive. There is a difference. We can go to the four Gospels, get our credentials, enter the Kingdom and go to work. It will be the Kingdom outlined by Stalker, and Jowett, and the poet, and Abraham Lincoln, and thousands of others who saw clearly, and, seeing, helped to clear away the impedimenta. But the Gospels are sufficient of themselves. That which is needful to know in them, a child could understand. The assumption that we cannot understand them without a commentary is like saying we can't eat without knowing how to cook.

What are the credentials ?

Friendship with Christ. "Ye are my friends," He said, "if ye do whatsoever I command you." What did He command ? "A new commandment I bring unto you—that ye love one another." Friendship and love, then, are the first things. Then a pure heart. "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God." No man can read the Gospels with an open mind and fail to feel the spirit that pervades them. When we enter into His friendship we get a sense of God. When we catch the spirit of it all we are impelled to continue the work He began. We get to work, putting our heart in tune with what the mental conception, the soul's vision, has revealed to us. Jesus asks us merely to

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join Him. He is the whole thing. With His example and in His spirit we begin to work. When we get light we share it. We share whatever else we have. We help the weak, we help heal the broken-hearted, we help to abolish evil, we assist to inaugurate good. In the process we may have put a dozen theological doctrines into practical operation, but we do it unconsciously. The thing to do is to live the life. To begin there, and the rest comes as naturally as the day follows the night.

What did Peter know about theology when he threw his nets into the boat and followed Him? Nothing!

What did old Matthew Levi know when he exchanged the squeezing of shekels out of the poor for a divine friendship? Nothing!

They knew Him. That is better than knowing *about* Him. One is life, the other is speculation. Christianity was a spiritual life before it was an intellectual system. Christianity is Christ. It is His way of looking at things, His way of doing things. He has the divine idea, and that is the thing that counts!

Men, called into the circle of Jesus' friends, came by degrees to believe the same truth, live the same life, and become imbued with the same hopes.

One of the obstacles that blocks the portals of the Kingdom of God is the "leaven of the Pharisees," which is hypocrisy. All of us know sanctimonious hypocrites who are punctilious in religion and bandits in business. Another is the effeminate type of bloodless preacher who is invisible six days of the week and incomprehensible on the seventh. Another is the leader who murders the King's English and Christ's ethics with equal facility. Still another is the legalist who knows the ten commandments, but who seems never to have heard of the eleventh: "A new commandment I bring unto you, that ye love one another."

There is a professional religious air around some people

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that repels us, there is a caste of religious goodness that is hard and unattractive. All of this is modern Pharisaism, and is as far removed from Christianity as the type that opposed Jesus. The cure for it is a study of the life of Jesus as found in the Gospels. Christ Himself is the criterion—not these.

Try to rid your minds of these obstacles. Clear away the impedimenta, much of which is of our own making. With an open mind read the Gospel of Mark. Read it as if you had never heard of the events narrated there. It will be a good investment of your time. It will quicken your mind, and stir your heart, and awaken your spirit to a new world—a new life. It has done it for millions. It will do it for you !

I began with a poet's religion ; let me close with a way of approach as outlined by Leigh Hunt :

“ Abou Ben Adhem (may his tribe increase !)
Awoke one night from a deep dream of peace,
And saw within the moonlight of his room,
Making it rich and like a lily in bloom,
An angel writing in a book of gold :—
Exceeding peace had made Ben Adhem bold,
And to the Presence in the room he said,
‘ What writest thou ? ’—the vision raised his head,
And with a look made all of sweet accord,
Answered, ‘ The names of those who love the Lord.’
‘ And is mine one ? ’ said Abou. ‘ Nay, not so,’
Replied the angel. Abou spoke more low,
But cheerly still ; and said, ‘ I pray thee then
Write me as one who loves his fellow-men.’
The angel wrote and vanished. The next night
It came again with a great wakening light,
And show'd the names whom love of God had bless'd,
And lo ! Ben Adhem's name led all the rest ! ”

Antrim, Ireland.

XIX

PHILOSOPHY FOR SOLDIERS

(To Officers and Men of the Australian Imperial Forces.)

OFFICERS AND COMRADES :

The title of my talk looks pretentious, but I can assure you at the start, that I do not intend to spend my time in the realm of abstruse phrases, or to obscure what I have to say by an array of technical terms. The word "philosophy" looks afar off and denotes to those who have spent more time in a mine than in a college, a subject drear and uninteresting. I do not intend to attempt even a definition, in a technical sense. The mere mention of the divisions and the sub-divisions of the schools, ancient and modern, would occupy hours. I will not attempt that either.

I begin by stating that it is a mistake to suppose that philosophy is a matter that concerns only the learned. It belongs to everybody. We live in everybody's world, and what concerns it, concerns us. Philosophy inquires into the nature of man and the nature of the world in which he lives. It is the thing that always asks "Why?" and gives a reason.

Children are born philosophers—they are interrogation marks, during their earlier years. When we tell them to "shut up," not because we don't want to answer their questions, but because we can't, we suppress the

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philosopher in them ! We tell them to be good, but we seldom tell them why they should be good.

There was a time when an exclusive set of social high priests believed it detrimental to their interests to provide for the education of the working classes. Perhaps there are still some of them around. The educational status of the people would indicate as much, even in the twentieth century. There was philosophy in their attitude, but it was a bad philosophy. They imagined that an increase of knowledge would mean a decrease of work. There may be some basis for their apprehension. An inquiry into the laws of life might lead us to the belief that there was something wrong with a state of society in which the great masses of the people should appear to come into the world saddled and bridled for the minority to ride ! All this has to do with philosophy. Most of us may be unacquainted with the technical terms of philosophy, but we all *live* and *think* the things that the terms try to explain. Philosophy is back of all life, all thought, all action. A man may have the same philosophy as the Apostle Paul, but he may have it for a different reason—and the reason is more important than the thing. If he is religious for the same reason as Paul, his religion is divine ; if it be in order to get business, or in order to be acquainted with the masters of material, then he is not a religious man at all, but a hypocritical profiteer !

In both attitudes the man has a philosophy. In one case it is good and in the other it is bad. I want to take a text as an outline of a good philosophy. It is a working programme, it is practical. By practical I mean it is workable.

For the purposes of this talk let us make the arbitrary statement that man is composed of body and spirit. The spirit is that part of the inner man that looks out toward the higher aspects of life—the higher and the highest which is eternity and God. It is distinguished

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by some psychologists from the soul, but I will not dwell on that now. It is distinguished from the body in that it has no fleshly desires. Its function is spiritual. Says St. Paul :

“ Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are of good report, whatsoever things are lovely—*think* on these things ! ”

Here we have a philosophy of the spirit, and in terms that a child could understand. To think on things true, good and beautiful is the function of the spirit.

As illuminating the words of St. Paul, let me add the outline of philosophy I find in A. Clutton-Brock's excellent little book, “ The Ultimate Belief.”

He speaks of the desires of the spirit. They are three, the search for the truth, the search for the good, the search for the beautiful : “ The intellectual activity, the moral activity, the æsthetic activity.”

I.—THE SEARCH FOR TRUTH

In the spirit's search for truth, there can be no ulterior motive. It is sought for its own sake, apart from any consideration of utility, profit, or even usefulness. It may be and often is all three, but if we search for it in order to attain these, the truth becomes not truth at all, but profit. It is in the very nature and essence of truth to benefit the searcher and mankind, but to desire truth for any other reason than for its own sake is like seeking religion in order to drive a few extra bargains, or through fear of death or hell. I think it was St. Theresa who said :

“ Would that I could quench hell and blot out heaven that men might love God for His own sake ! ”

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It is not possible for many of us to devote all our time to the study of theology, philosophy or ethics. It takes a lifetime to do well any one of the three. On the other hand, you are not a sponge to mop anything that is handed out to you. You have a spirit, one of whose chief desires is to know the truth, not the truth about everything, but the truth about something. We may accept the investigations of others, but what we accept must appeal to us as true, irrespective of benefits or inconveniences. There are times when the truth is unprofitable to the body, or the bodily comforts, yet it enriches the spirit. It may take us out of our party or out of our sect. It may even force us to change our job.

Let me put it in the form of a figure. There is a long avenue down which the human race has travelled since the misty dawn of history. Let us call it the avenue of Truth. Strewn along its borders are the graves and monuments of men and women who died there in the quest of that which is true. They were prophets and thinkers and martyrs. They gave up their lives as readily for the truth as our soldiers are doing now on the field of battle for England.

Let us suppose half a dozen men to be standing around a pillar or a beautiful Corinthian column. Each man sees a part of it. No man can see it all. How foolish it would be for them to quarrel over which of them sees most of it! How still more foolish to kill each other over it! Yet that is about what has happened, with regard to truth. That is why there are so many graves on this long avenue.

At the end of the avenue, silhouetted against the sky, we see the shadow of a cross. That to us marks the supreme sacrifice on behalf of truth. The desire for truth will lead us there. But the paradox is that the searchers for truth, even the truth of the cross, have been as stupid and brutal with each other as the searchers for

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gold. Nay, mercilessly killed each other, because all could not see it in the same way. We can disagree over a horse, and give each other credit for difference of opinion, but we become violent and intolerant over the truth about God. As the world grows older it becomes wiser, saner and more tolerant. The desire for truth must be distinguished from telling the truth. One is thought, the other is action. One is an intellectual activity and the other a moral activity. They are ultimately related, but not identical.

II.—THE SEARCH FOR THE GOOD

The activity of the spirit which is a desire or quest of that which is good, is a cultivation of the moral sense. The moral sense is the seat of the liking or disliking one feels toward actions as good or bad, apart from any conscious reference either to the good of the individual or to society. It is, however, more than that. It is a desire for a just and harmonious relationship between units of society. It is a practical activity. It has to do with action. The cultivation of the moral sense is an intellectual aspect only. The moral activity may begin there, but it can only be satisfied in action. The search for the good is a search for the right—the right thing, the right relation. The good must be sought for its own sake. It does good to others, not that the doing may have a reciprocal relation, or have an axe to grind, but simply and solely because it is good! Whatever the spirit desires for its own sake is right. If it has any other motive it is wrong.

In these scales you may weigh the issues of the world war. Your fighting is a search for the good, it is a moral action. You are fighting for a just and harmonious relationship between peoples. In the belief that it can

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come in no other way you act, you sacrifice. If it means to you a mere adventure, it is not the desire for the good. Motive is everything. If our ministry to others has an ulterior motive it is not ministry, but a selfish investment of time or money or effort. The desire for the good must be disinterested.

I am suspicious of an evangelist who gathers up the questionable results of his exhortations, as a Sioux-Indian gathers scalps in his belt, to show his prowess!

I am suspicious, and so are you, of a soldier who takes a chance with the D.S.O. or V.C. in view!

I am suspicious of a church, or a mission, or a religious society that bombards me with figures, and parades, and makes capital out of whatever of virtue it possesses!

The philosophy of the spirit demands that we do good for the sake of the good and for its own sake only!

III.—THE SEARCH FOR THE BEAUTIFUL

The desire for that which is beautiful is not to be confounded with a love of pictures. In the popular mind the æsthetic activity is usually associated with paintings, statuary, architecture!

It is these, but it is much more. When you take a candle into a dark room, the darkness vanishes. The desire for that which is beautiful holds a candle up in the midst of ugliness. The light beautiful dispels the darkness of ugliness. Not in art merely, but in life. As desire for truth operates in all departments of intellectual life, as the desire for the good operates in all departments of moral life, so the desire for beauty penetrates wherever there is ugliness—and beauty, like the others, must be sought for its own sake.

That a man or a woman may get both a career and a living by the search need not vitiate the desire. "He

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that preaches the Gospel shall live by the Gospel " is as true of the activities of the spirit in men as it is of the function of a religious teacher. The man who finds the good or the true or the beautiful in a book, or an act, or in a painting, finds it for the universe !

Much of the ugliness of the world exists because the desire for beauty is blunted in the spirits of those who search and never find. How is it possible for millions of poor people to find beauty ? Millions of our fellow beings never have a chance to see beauty in any form. Conditions force them to spend their lives in the most stupid forms of ugliness and filth. The spirit desires beauty for its own sake, but what our spirit desires other spirits desire. The desire is universal and fundamental.

The philosophy of the spirit will lead us into all truth, all good, all beauty. It includes religion. To ask if it " pays " frustrates the design. We must desire it and search for it, whether it pays or not. We must make education square itself with the philosophy of the spirit. We must not be content with telling our children to be good. We must give them a reason for it. We must have a reason ourselves.

The time has already gone. I must close. I have given merely the barest outline of this philosophy of the spirit, but I think it is sufficient for a beginning—a foundation on which the dullest of us may build a superstructure.

Wareham, Dorset.

XX

A CORINTHIAN COLUMN

COMRADES :

Micah was a prophet of the poor. He lived in the eighth century B.C. He left us a book—a wonderful book. It is a record of his time and a vision of the future. For two thousand years the Christians, when asked for credentials, have quoted Micah. In his vision he saw a new deliverer for his people. He was to come out of Bethlehem. He saw a new political economy and a new religion. Those are important things. Nothing in life is more important. There are scholarly Christians who tell us that what he had in mind was Israel—the nation—not a person. Nevertheless, Christians stick to the traditional belief that Jesus fulfilled the prophecy of Micah. Apart from the controversy let us look at the vision of the prophet.

He tells us that the people were exploited—that the judges and the priests were corrupt. He spared nobody—he gave them all their due. Then he gives hope. He points the way out. . . . We may dismiss the prophecy as far as it relates to the birthplace of Jesus. That is unimportant. Jesus came, and the world knows what He stood for and what He did.

There are two aspects of Micah's new social order that

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are very important. One was the abolition of war and the other a minimum economic condition. He said :

“ Swords shall be beaten into ploughshares and spears into pruning-hooks, and nation shall not go to war against nation any more.”

Up-to-date Christian nations have ignored that part of the vision. When we quote it we only emphasize our own importance. We all desire it, but how shall it be brought about ? When Jesus came He emphasized the vision of Micah. There is no question about that. The fact that a pin-headed ruler launched this greatest war in human history must not utterly discourage us. Wars will cease—not, perhaps, until crowns can be bought in second-hand curiosity shops—but they will cease.

But here is something just as important as the abolition of war—the abolition of poverty :

“ And every man shall sit under his own vine and fig tree, and none shall make him afraid.”

We do not need to make this image go on all fours in order to get at the truth that Micah was trying to convey. Probably the chief fear of mankind is the fear of tomorrow's food and next month's rent. It is where I have lived most of my life. The fig tree is a figure of speech—it represents the minimum. It is a picture of contentment. Christianity concerns itself very much about the geography of the vision, but passes over the economic aspect with scant emphasis. Not so with Jesus. He was so concerned about the poor that He almost debarred rich men from the kingdom of heaven.

Why shouldn't a vine and fig tree—to use Micah's figure—be the minimum of an Englishman's existence as well as a Jew's ?

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We are spending money in amounts that are bewildering and staggering, we are pouring out life for liberty! What is this liberty we are talking so much about, and sacrificing so much for? Is it liberty to starve? Liberty to go on living a life below the standard of the horse? That was the condition of tens of thousands before the war! You don't believe it is. I don't believe it either! The only liberty worth fighting such a war for is the liberty of life and the unfettered pursuit of happiness—liberty to live a clean, normal, healthy life of enjoyment and self-expression. It is in the hope that such a liberty as that shall be yours and everybody's that you suffer and sacrifice and fight. Nothing less is human, nothing less is Biblical, nothing less is Christian! Nothing less is worth the price you pay.

Micah's vision of a new religion is as interesting as his vision of a new economic order.

It is a wonderful picture. Full of imagery, inspiration and power.

☛ God has a controversy with His people. He asks what He has done unto them? The people ask what He wants? What will satisfy Him? Does He want rams? They will give thousands. Does He want oil for sacrifice? They will pour out rivers of it! They will even give the fruit of their bodies for the sins of their souls!

God gives them His answer:

*“What doth the Lord require of thee, O Israel,
but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly
with God?”*

In order to fix this programme of religion in your mind, let me attach it to a figure. A Corinthian column has three parts; the base, the shaft and the capital. Attach in your mind a requirement of God to each part of the column and you have the character column of Micah.

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Let us take it part by part. The base, then, is Justice. It is as easy now as it was then to attempt to placate God with something He doesn't want. We offer money; they offered rams. We offer a church, a cathedral, a college or a hospital; they offered oil. The principle was the same. They had thrown ethics into the dust-bin, they had punctiliously observed the forms of religion, but the substance was not there. They had bartered their souls for the comforts of life. They had fooled others, they had fooled themselves, now they are trying to fool God.

What kind of justice did God require? A vine and fig tree sort, unquestionably—Justice is not a mere balanced selfishness. It is a fair share of the good things of life. It is getting out of life something commensurate to what we put into it. Without the sense of God it is impossible to strike balance. The prevailing cry is: "What can I get out of life?" When we have a sense of God we put it the other way—we ask what we can put into it?

Justice must be the foundation of any structure that proposes to do the will of God. That applies to all forms of religion, to churches and associations calling themselves Christian.

The second part is the shaft. We have called that Mercy. Mercy is a moral activity of the spirit. In the Old Testament, when God is the subject, it is loving-kindness. There are people to whom, as a matter of justice, we owe nothing. In that case compassion, pity and consideration make the sum of Mercy and are applied. A man may be justly treated and still be an object of mercy. It applies to the dumb brutes that serve us in our daily needs. It applies to social cripples—to the dependent and the weak. Even in an ideal state of universal justice there would still be a place for merciful consideration. It has been likened to the gentle dew of Heaven, and Jesus Himself enshrined the

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merciful as amongst those who were assured of the blessing of God.

Humility is the capital, surrounded by the lily work and acanthus leaves. Someone asked John Wesley what humility was, and he answered: "When a man has a just estimate of himself—that is humility." Jesus did not define it—He demonstrated it. "Who is greater," he asked, "he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth?" And they answered: "He that sitteth at meat." And He said: "I am among you as he that serves." Rather than remonstrate with His disciples, He took a towel and washed the disciples' feet. That was an act, and the supreme act, of humility. It is not the loss of self-respect. It is the absence of self-conceit. It is not a spurious abasement, nor the Uriah Heep whine of cloaked hypocrisy, it is a noble dignity stooping to perform a minor act in a major key.

When St. Augustine was asked: "What is the first article in the Christian religion?" he answered, "Humility." And they said, "What is the second?" and he said, "Humility." And they said, "What is the third?" and he said "Humility."

What doth the Lord require of thee, Oh England, but to do justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with thy God!

London.

XXI

TWENTY YEARS HENCE

COMRADES :

There are many reasons for personal purity. I will speak of three. It is a question in which we are all vitally concerned. No one is immune. Most of the vices of life are virtues twisted out of their legitimate channel, and made to serve an opposite purpose. It is so with this one.

In conversation with a thief you may talk of art, or science, or religion, or the weather, and he will feel at home and unembarrassed. There is but one subject that will annoy him and make him quickly change the subject—that is theft. It is his sore point. The Anglo-Saxon avoids whatever gives him personal qualms of conscience. The sex question is too delicate for conversation, we are told, so we avoid it. The bare fact is that we avoid it from a consciousness of guilt and a sense of prudery.

Our boys and girls have to go out and learn the facts of the origin of life from gutter-snipes who besmear it with the most vulgar allusions and suggestions.

The first reason for personal purity is the care of the body. All thought is built on a physical foundation. The body is the temple of the spirit, the house of the soul. It is our working machine.

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It is, after all, a rather delicate mechanism, and when out of order gives trouble and pain and inconvenience.

Of all the evils that flesh is heir to, none is so freighted with pain and loathing as venereal disease.

It is not only destructive to the body, but no disease is so poisonous to the soul and destructive to the spirit. The man afflicted with it has no peace, no rest, no mental growth, no spiritual development. While he is in its loathsome grip he suffers the torments of the damned. He can talk of all other diseases. He has to remain silent on that one. Sympathy is an agent in the alleviation of pain. This disease drags out its tortuous existence without a shred of sympathy.

A man possessing the disease in its worst form is not only a nuisance to himself, but a nuisance and a menace to all around him. He becomes secretive, furtive, ashamed and hypocritical. He gradually weaves around himself a cage, invisible, it is true, but real, nevertheless. There he lives behind the bars, a captive, a slave in his own house and amongst his own friends.

When I was on board a British man-of-war, I used to have to listen to continual joking about this foul, degrading cancer all day long. It is the same now. In huts and tents and barrack rooms men laugh and pun over it, but when they are alone, they weep salt tears over it, for in their heart of hearts they know that the best and noblest and purest of life for them is a thing of the past.

The destruction of a man's own body and the impairment of his physical power is not the worst feature of it. It would not be such a loss to mankind if a man could take the physical punishment that follows, and let it end there, but he transmits it to others.

Every normal young man expects some day to meet a young woman with whom he can go through life. He expects her to be pure. He excuses himself. He

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will not excuse her. But she has as much right to demand purity in him as he has in her. He may do it innocently or he may do it deliberately, but if he has the filthy virus in his blood he will transmit it. He can't help himself! To smite with a blighting curse a fair young companion is bad—very bad, but to bring a child into the world, damned in its mother's womb, is about as sad a thought as the human mind can think! Just how often this happens, the vital statistics of all nations can tell.

England needs your bodily power in this terrible crisis, comrade; you will need it when the war is over. It is not for these I plead. I appeal to you on behalf of the little children as yet unborn—the England that is to be! Life at best is hard for us who toil with our bare hands. You are pure now, you are strong; in the name of England, in the name of God, I pray you be strong of will and overcome!

There is another phase of the question which is almost as important as this one. It is the question of the girl on the streets. I speak of her as a social type—a type whose soul is sacrificed to lust. They are the daughters of the poor. A rich girl or a rich woman may sacrifice her virtue, but she does not barter it on the streets. She does not offer it in the market where virtue is exchanged for the means of life. There are two sides to the question. The economic aspect which forces a girl out of necessity on the streets, and the lust which takes advantage of the necessity. The one balances the other. One is as bad and unnecessary as the other.

Prostitution, like a foul stain, has besmirched civilization for centuries. It can be eradicated. Chivalry will be necessary. Economic progress in the lot of women will be necessary, and self-control of men and the grace of God.

Let me put it this way to you. Twenty years from

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to-night, if the evil continues, there will be on the streets a hundred thousand girls who are now at this minute little children on their mother's knee. If the parents of these little ones could look out into the future and see their daughters, they would put up a fight—a desperate fight, but they do not know. Twenty years ago the girls who are on the streets to-night were just as pure, just as innocent, as the children of to-day—but they are there to-night—not fallen, but knocked down! Knocked down by circumstances and by male prostitutes.

Let me look still farther ahead, for the case has hardly arrived at your door yet. If I say thirty years from to-night it comes nearer home! Within the next five or ten years many of you will be married, and you will be the fathers of children. Suppose you could have a look at the streets of the great cities at midnight thirty years hence, in the winter of 1946. Ah, perhaps you will be in your grave. Then let me suppose that in the spirit you can come back and walk the streets, and the first girl you meet selling her virtue for a morsel of bread is your own daughter? You can't help her, she must go on and on down the long stretch that leads to hell and the grave!

Is it impossible? No more impossible for yours than for the children of other parents! Ah, to think of *your* child in that condition sends a shiver through you!

If you are dead and in your grave and your spirit is conscious of what is going on and—God forbid!—your child is in danger, you would, if you could, shout across that gulf which divides the dead from the living, and you would ask us to help her! The best we could do would be to take her out of the life!

Well, brother of mine, I am here pleading with you to help *somebody's* daughter. Help the situation by keeping yourself pure! You can do it by a supreme will-power, you can do it with the help of God—you can do

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it by letting the great White Comrade help and direct and lead you !

I have spoken of the body and of our duty to the children and the daughters of men. Let me end by saying that impure thought blocks the pathway to God as effectually as personal impurity. Our bodies are the temple of God. Let us keep them clean and pure and wholesome, and to that extent be a helper of England and a credit to ourselves.

If you treat every girl as you would have another man treat your own sister you will escape many a snare. No matter how low we fall we never get quite to the point when we would not sacrifice to save our own.

Glasgow.

XXII

HOW AN OLD SHOEMAKER FOUND GOD

COMRADES :

Here is a story told by Tolstoy. I will give the outline and try to find its meaning.

An old shoemaker becomes tired of life. He lives alone in a basement cellar. Half his little window overlooks the sidewalk of a main street in a great Russian city.

One day an old priest called and Martin told him how tired of life he had grown. It was just one long, monotonous round of working, sleeping and eating. He had lost interest and hoped for death.

"If you will go down to the market-place," the priest said, "you will find a little book and in it you will find help and comfort." He told him the nature of the book and its name. When he had gone the old man smiled incredulously and muttered to himself something about priests being paid to tell folks such silly tales. He couldn't put the idea out of his mind, however, and one day he shut the shop and went off to the market. On the second-hand book-stall he handled the books and asked the prices. Then he told the store-keeper what he was looking for and he was handed a little volume containing the four Gospels. He stuffed it into his blouse and went off home, wondering as he went whether the whole thing wasn't a fairy-tale fit for children?

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When he got home he cleaned his old spectacles and began at the beginning. His mind did not fully comprehend what he read and when he came to a long list of names, he read half through it and then with a sigh gave it up.

After he had finished his work that night he made another attempt. Still he understood not. These fitful attempts followed each other for days. Then he gave it up as a bad job and put it away on a shelf.

About a week later he tried again—this time he read a verse in one book and a verse in another, but they had no connection and he was as mystified as when he began. He was just about to abandon it for the last time when he heard a voice. It was a soft, melodious voice, and rather startled him. The voice said: "Martin, I am coming to see you to-morrow." "That," said the old man, "is the voice of Batushka—our little Father Christ." It was so strange, so impossible! How could Batushka think of coming to visit an old shoemaker in a basement cellar? He must be in his dotage! But the voice spoke again and reassured him. He sat up late, thinking and wondering about the strangest occurrence of his life. When he went to bed he was at rest about it—he was assured in his mind that on the morrow Batushka would really come to his shop and make him a visit.

Next morning when he arose he discovered that snow was falling fast. There was a fierce wind blowing too, and his first thought was of the sufferings of the poor. His second thought was about the visit of Batushka. He still felt that He would come, but occasional doubts flitted through his mind. He lit the fire and put some water on to boil. Then he sat down to work at his bench. As the people went to and fro on the sidewalk he recognized some of them. He could only see their feet, and he had mended some of the boots he saw. The water began

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to boil and he made some tea. Just as he was about to have breakfast he heard a noise on the sidewalk. It attracted his attention in a more than ordinary way. He went out and up the stone steps to the sidewalk. There he found a tall, gaunt old soldier brushing the snow from the path in the hopes that the pedestrians would appreciate a clear pathway and give him a copper. It was bitterly cold and the sweeper was swinging his arms around him to thaw out his frozen fingers.

Martin saw the situation. He knew what to do. He took the old soldier downstairs and gave him some hot tea. He made him sit beside the fire and warm himself. When he was refreshed and warmed he arose to go. In whispered tones and in a quiet, confidential way Martin told him that Batushka was coming to visit him! The old soldier looked as if he felt that the shoemaker's headpiece was not quite square on his shoulders.

"Well," the stranger said, "there's nothing impossible with God—He may come!"

The wind blew on. The snow fell. Sometimes it was sleet. The people hurried by and the old shoemaker sat on his bench mending a boot, but wanting and hoping to be interrupted in his work by a heavenly visitor.

Noon-time came and nothing had occurred. He heard a cry—the cry of a baby out in the bitter wind and sleet of the city street. He ran out and found a woman turning her back to the blast and wrapping a thin shawl tightly around her baby. Martin invited her to come down and share his potato soup and get herself warmed. She came gladly. He took the baby himself, and while the mother dried her bedraggled skirts and supped her soup he played with it.

"I had a baby once," he told the woman, "but he died, so did his mother, and of late I have been getting tired of life."

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The woman told her story. It was more pitiful than his. Her husband was a soldier. He had gone off to fight for his country and she became a cook. Then her baby came, and nobody wanted a cook with a little baby like that. So she was discharged. Her money soon went and she was penniless and on the streets.

"Your shawl is very thin," he said. "I have a better one in pawn," she answered. He put his hand into a hole in the wall and drew out a handful of coppers. "Take it," he said, "and get your warm shawl out of pawn; your baby needs it."

So he gave her all he had, and when warmed and comforted she went off out into the world again.

All day the storm continued. All day he continued to watch and wait. He worked at his bench all afternoon, and in the twilight became uneasy. Batushka had not arrived and the likelihood of his coming became less and less. He was just about to get his evening meal when, for a third time, he was attracted to the sidewalk. He ran up the stone steps and found a boy and an old apple-woman in a violent altercation. The old woman, coming along the street with a basket of apples for sale on her arm and a bag of wood chips on her shoulder, had become a temptation to the ten-year-old boy. He grabbed an apple and was about to run away, but the old woman was too quick for him. She caught him by the hair and held on while she administered the law. Martin went in between them and the old woman gave him a cross-section of her warmest invective. He persisted, however, as a peace-maker—he paid for the apple and helped her with the chips. When she departed he addressed the culprit, gave him some advice and told him to follow the woman and carry her bag! The lad demurred at first, but finally ran after her. The last old Martin saw of them was as they turned a distant corner—the boy was carrying the bag and the old woman the basket.

HOW AN OLD SHOEMAKER FOUND GOD

He lit his lamp and sat down to supper. Strange thoughts chased each other through his mystified mind. Batushka had not come—the day was almost passed. He cleaned his spectacles, took down the mysterious book and began to read. As usual, he could make little of it. While he was turning the leaves over in a half-dreamy sort of way he saw a light in the darkest corner of his cellar. Out of the light came a vision most wonderful to behold. There in a frame of light stood the old soldier he had warmed and refreshed in the morning. His face was shining like the face of an angel and over his head there was a halo of glory.

“I am Batushka, your little Father Christ,” said the soldier, as he vanished out of sight. Then came the woman and her babe and the light of God shone from their faces and the saints’ nimbus was over their heads. “We are Batushka, your little Father Christ,” they said, and vanished in the darkness. Last of all came the apple-woman and the boy, and they stood hand in hand, like shining angels from the other world. They were smiling as they said, so sweetly now and softly: “We, too, are Batushka, your little Father Christ.”

The little room became dark, save for the rays of the lamp that illuminated the pages of the mysterious book in front of him. As he looked again at the book his eyes glanced on these words:

“Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, my little ones, ye have done it unto me.”

“Ah,” the old man exclaimed, “now I see, now I understand. He came three times to-day, and I fed Him, clothed Him, comforted Him and gave Him peace! Why should I want to die?”

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Comrades, that little story comes nearer the story of the Prodigal Son than anything I know. Tolstoy was one of the world's great writers, but he never wrote anything greater than that. I have not told it quite as he wrote it, but I have given you the heart of it. It is superfluous to comment on it. I will simply say that it is a little chapter of that newer Bible that points the way, that is also a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path.

Edinburgh.

XXIII

THE STORY OF BILLY HICKS

THE "still" blew, and a thousand men, in all parts of the ship, stood as if riveted to the decks. As the sound died away the boatswain's mate stood at the forward hatchway on the port side and blew his whistle until his face looked like a bladder. Then he took the whistle from his mouth, and with the maximum of lung-power shouted: "D'ye hear there! All hands on deck!!"

As the last man scrambled out of the hatchway from below a sharp, ringing order came from the bridge: "Strike the lower yards and topmasts! Stand by! Away aloft!!"

This evolution was the show piece of the Navy, whose fighting ships had yards and masts. It was a thrilling and spectacular sight to see the sailors spring at the rigging like cats, and climb with lightning rapidity to the tops.

This particular evolution was performed on the flagship of the Mediterranean squadron a generation ago. I was of those who wore boots, and consequently never went aloft. That day I watched the sailors with admiration—and envy. The fleet had been cruising around the island of Sicily, and, having struck a bit of rough weather, the commander—a seaman of the old school—used it for old-time sea tactics.

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Scarcely had the men reached the tops when the next order rang out : " Bear out on the yard-arm ! "

As the men made the first movement to bear out to port and starboard on the huge yard, the captain of the foretop missed his footing, or lost his hold, and plunged headlong to the forecastle. The evolution was interrupted. As we carried his lifeless body below the commander ordered the crew to their mess decks for the day. That evening orders were issued for the burial. It was to take place the following afternoon ashore. Meantime a new captain of the foretop was appointed, and the next day at the same hour—about noon—the evolution was to be completed. By a strange coincidence, at the same order the new captain lost either his nerve or his footing, and plunged to his death within a few feet of where his predecessor fell.

That afternoon I was one of a firing party that paid the last tribute of respect to our dead shipmates, as we buried them in an ancient graveyard in Famagusta.

We laugh at the idea that " men who go down to the sea in ships and do business in great waters " are superstitious. Seamen themselves laugh. But when pinned down to the fact, few of us on that ship would have denied that away down deep in our consciousness there lurked a foreboding that whoever the third man should be he was doomed. That evening the majority of us were thinking less of the two who had died than of the *third* who had to die.

Within a few hours of the burial, a new captain of the foretop was appointed. The new captain was Billy Hicks. He was as fine a seaman and as popular among his shipmates as any man who ever trod the deck of a ship. He had one drawback—a cardinal one. There were times when he left the shore not knowing which was his ship ! He had been a first-class petty officer many times. When he came aboard *non compos mentis* he

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usually went back to his original rating. He was a jovial chap. He had a round, red face, with a smile that only John Barleycorn could wipe off. When he laughed the deck shook!

Under ordinary circumstances we would have hailed his promotion with unalloyed joy. As it was, we looked upon it as a sentence—a sentence of death. Nobody said that: nobody dared, but that was what we thought. Courageous ones congratulated him. They did it with a smile, but deep down in their hearts they meant the opposite of what they said. I was of those who gave him a wide berth that day—not because I loved him less, but because I was afraid he would see through my hypocrisy and answer me in words not lawful to utter!

The following day at noon the crew went at the evolution for the *third* time. I have faced death with nerves infinitely less keyed up. Hundreds of others were in the same nerve-strung condition. Laughter—and the possibility of it—was wiped clean from our faces. We awaited with intense and breathless anxiety the fatal order “*Away aloft!*” Keen-eyed and choked with excitement we watched the tops! “*Bear out on the yard-arm!*” We held our breath. The men sprang from the tops, all eyes fixed on the captain of the foretop! He stood there and directed his men with his old-time, boyish smile. We breathed easily. It was over. The crisis was past, and we joked and laughed like children. When Billy Hicks sprang from the rigging to the fo’castle we wanted to hug him!

I was getting my education on board that ship. In order to acquire a grasp of English, I became a ward-room servant. Around the wardroom table I heard the language spoken as correctly as it was spoken in a university class-room. Inside my jacket I had a little pad and a pencil attached, and when new words and new thoughts were uttered I usually ran out to the pantry

GOD AND TOMMY ATKINS

and jotted them down, and later, under a fighting lamp, made a closer acquaintance.

One day, about two weeks after the strange occurrences, the pad and pencil came in handy. An officer of the wardroom had a visitor—an officer of a sister ship. I served them with tea, and incidentally learned the secret of Billy Hicks! The dialogue that interested me intensely was about as follows:

“Have you a man on board named Hicks?”

“Yes.”

“What is he?”

“Captain of the foretop. Why do you ask?”

“Well,” said the officer, smiling, “I do not know of any Admiralty regulation that prevents even a captain of the foretop from taking the Almighty into his confidence, but the means he uses may be another question.

“About two weeks ago I was officer of the watch, and noticed the lights flashing. It was a very dark night, and the flashes on that account were clear and distinct. I told my signal officer to take it down, and this is what he handed me.” As he spoke he had been turning over the pages of a note-book. He read:

“ ‘G-o-d t-h-i-s i-s B-i-l-l-y H-i-c-k-s. I-’v-e b-i-n p-r-o-m-o-t-e-d c-a-p o-f t-h-e f-o-r-e-t-o-p. G-o-d I a-i-n’t a-f-r-a-i-d o-f d-e-a-t-h b-u-t F-a-t-h-e-r w-h-e-n I g-o a-l-o-f-t t-o-m-o-r-r-o-w g-i-v-e m-e t-h-e g-u-t-s t-o p-l-a-y t-h-e m-a-n a-n-d G-o-d g-i-v-e m-e a l-i-t-t-l-e o-f t-h-e f-e-e-l-i-n-g I u-s-e-d t-o h-a-v-e w-h-e-n I n-e-l-t a-t m-y m-o-t-h-e-r’s n-e-e a-n-d s-a-i-d O-u-r F-a-t-h-e-r.

“ ‘G-o-o-d-n-i-g-h-t G-o-d.

“ ‘B-I-L-L-Y H-I-C-K-S.’ ”

The following day was “make-and-mend-clothes day”—that was the official name given to our weekly

THE STORY OF BILLY HICKS

half-holiday in the Mediterranean. The days were warm, and full of sunshine. We forgathered in the fo'castle. There was boxing, fencing, and games of skill and strength. Some were writing letters, others doing fancy work in embroidery. Every man was at his hobby for the afternoon. I found Billy Hicks at work with his needle. Sitting quietly down beside him, I pulled out the little pad and read the first two lines !

"Here, kid!" he said, in a tense, low voice, as he looked at me with glaring eyes, "what'er ye pullin' on me, eh?"

"Sounds familiar, eh?" I answered, smiling. He arose, gripped me by the wrist, and took me to a vacant spot by the side of the ship. Then he shot in a volley of questions.

"Look here," I said, "I'll divvy up with you—you tell me why you flashed it, and I'll tell you how I got it?"

"Righto—you go on!" he said.

"No, siree, you go on, it's up to you!" He moved again. I followed him. This time to the hurricane deck, where we seated ourselves on a little nine-pounder used for saluting purposes.

"Got the whole thing?" he asked.

"Yes, even the bad spelling!"

"Of course," he said, sarcastically. "If God was as particular about a comma as you snivelling sky pilots an' 'oly Joes from Plymouth, I'd never sent it at all!"

"Please don't be sarcastic, Billy," I appealed.

"You begun it!"

"I was trying to be funny."

"Spellin's a rare sport with me—I ain't no Oxford don!"

"All right; to get back where we begun, I'll tell my part first—how's that?"

"Fine—go ahead!"

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When I finished he told his story in a plain, bluff sailor's way :

"An hour after I was made captain of th' foretop I was shavin' an' noticed in th' glass that my red face was white as death. My hand trembled, too. I went below to the flats, pulled my bag out, sat on it, an' had a good think. Says I to myself, 'You've got a bad case of funk—you're white at th' gills, an' afraid.' Two men were down an' out, an' I was th' *third* to go !

"I was getting worse all th' time. When the marine came forward to strike three bells in the first watch I was walkin' fore an' aft in the fo'castle. 'Who's officer of th' watch?' says I.

" 'De Lisle,' says he.

" 'Righto,' says I, an' up I goes to bridge.

"I tells the officer th' best yarn I could spin about keepin' my 'and in line, in signallin'. De Lisle's the stuff w'at real men is made of. 'All right, Hicks,' he says, 'go a'ead.' So I goes, an' when I got that 'ere light in m' 'and, I let fly the message w'at was in m' 'eart to God. Now you've got it, kid—but not quite th' whole of it !" At this juncture he caught me again by the wrist, and in low, serious tones said : "Don't you be spouting w'at I've told you to them 'oly Joes ; if you do I'll knock that red 'ead clean off yer sholders ! I'm a-goin' t' do me own spoutin'. I've quit the grog, I've quit th' low-down lingo, an' as God 'anded me th' nerve t' play th' man, I'm a-goin' t' stand square on me own 'eels an' honour 'Im—see ?"

And he did !

*To the Royal Naval Reserve,
Crystal Palace, London.*

XXIV

GOD AND TOMMY ATKINS

THEY compete for his soul. Through his needs they approach him—mind, heart, soul, stomach. They go where he goes. They go with huts, tents, canteens and concerts. Services, sermons and lectures await him on every hand. Tracts by the million are written for him. Books by the score are published about him. He has been preached at, prayed at, advised, coddled, amused and abused. The best and worst of the preachers have had their fling at him. The theologians have diagnosed him. They have raised him up, they have cast him down. He is catalogued as a saint, he is one removal from a fiend. He is good and bad and indifferent. He is religious and irreligious. He is getting better, he is becoming worse. He is appreciative and courteous, he has no manners and he does not care.

The Church of England, the Church of Rome, the sects and missions and armies and associations are after him; they present their claims, they point the way—differently, like a paper of tacks! They attract him, draw him, drive him, with flaming posters and attractive bait. They bribe him, cajole him, corral him. They

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bury him in Bibles, books, tracts. He is auctioned and the creeds of an Empire bid.

He is the writer's copy, the preacher's field, a model for poets, and to the historian the fabric of a tale. He is an abstraction, yet concrete; known, yet unknown; seen and unseen.

But yesterday he was nobody, for whom nobody cared. To-day he is somebody, for whom everybody cares. He came from field and farm, from shop and forge and factory. He emerged from the mines, he swarmed up out of holes in the ground. He came down off his stool. He laid aside his pen, his pickaxe and hammer, and in his strength and in his weakness he stands as the human embodiment of an Empire's life.

He is elusive, ethereal and fine, he is primordial and rough-hewn. He is fine-strung, yet in his veins flows the blood of his savage ancestors.

He has grovelled down to the depths of hell. He has climbed to the gates of heaven. His feet are in the slime of earth, his head is among the stars. Samson, like him, takes hold of the pillars of the temple of character and brings it down in ruins with a crash. Then, like the phoenix, he arises out of the wreckage, erect and unashamed.

Visionless, he is stodgy, sluggish, inert. When moved by vision, the earth shakes, thrones tremble and tyrants disappear. He builds the cities. He makes the ocean gleam in the white wake of the ships he builds, he tracks the continent for the iron horse, he tunnels the mountains, he delves in the mines, he forces the earth to open her bosom and feed the world. He creates all wealth and lives in poverty, he clothes the world and is arrayed in rags, he builds the palaces and lives in a hovel.

Here is the tragedy and hope of the world. His is a

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heart of steel. He is England's standard-bearer, and through his eyes millions of men and women and little children see the dawn of hope !

And while the guns reek and roar, and the earth is churned to mud, around him, while the fate of an Empire hangs on the strength of his arm, his soul, his life ; we bicker and cavil and discuss whether when the game is over and his job is done, he will go to heaven or be condemned to hell !

" This way ! " says the Dissenter.

" My way is broad," cries the Romanist.

" My way is sure—and respectable ! " adds the Anglican.

" We have piped unto you, and you have not danced," sings a chorus of Uplifters.

" We fed you, and you did not sign our card ! " whines the inefficient good.

And he answers : " God I know, and Christ I know, but who are you ? "

The little strings attached to petty bribes swell into cables, the cup of water becomes a sea, they count the courtesies, they magnify mole-hills into mountains, they twist and squirm and look askance !

" And who are *you* ? " they ask.

" I AM TOMMY ATKINS ! The incarnation of England that was, and is, and is to be ! I am the guardian of her honour, the avenger of her dead and the defender of her children ! I am an agent of the Infinite, the forerunner of Demos and a righter of world wrongs. Above the din of battle I hear the voice of God. I know the Great White Comrade. He stands beside me as I do England's work. My house of prayer is a slimy mud-hole, the vault of heaven is my temple dome, my ears are deaf to your pious phrases. I have no stomach for your war of words. When the task is over and the work is done, when a world in peace knows the price

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we paid, I shall stand before Him in blood-smeared garments—I shall ask no pity—offer no excuse !

“ I have done my bit, God, and here’s your talent ; I have multiplied it as best I could !

“ And I shall salute Him, my great Commander, and await in silence His next command ! ”

PRAYER

LORD GOD OF OUR FATHERS !

As they were, so are we, thy children. In this time of change, of life and death, and storm and stress of soul and mind, we draw nigh to Thee ! We come not as cowards or beggars, we come as children come to a parent, for inspiration, for comfort, for communion.

We come to Thee at the end of the day's work. We have blundered, we have made mistakes. Forgive us ! We ask for nothing inconsistent with sonship—nothing that is not within Thy province to give. For our souls we are concerned. The inner light grows dim in the midst of conflicting interests. We draw nigh for more light. The moral sense becomes dull in the multitude of subtle temptations with which we are surrounded ; we come to Thee for moral courage. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.

Kind spirit of Christ who led men of old—lead us too. We would practise Thy presence, we would be hands for Thee, feet for Thee, and we would work and walk as becometh the ideal of the divine friendship which is ours.

Some of our comrades leave us to-morrow—shortly they will be in the conflict. Oh, Thou Great White Comrade of the common soldier, make Thy presence known and felt as the angel of death draws nigh ! We

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thank Thee for the past, Thou art with us now, we will trust Thee for all the future !

Thou hast touched with infinite tenderness the ministering hands of doctors and nurses, Thou hast been with our men in the trenches and in the air and at sea !

Thou hast been in the bereaved homes comforting widows, and orphans, and fathers and mothers. Our hearts are grateful. We give Thee thanks. In these abnormal conditions give us normal minds. May the smoke of battle not blind us to the vision beautiful. We would keep our hearts warm and tender towards friends and loved ones. Even to our enemies we would harbour no hate.

Give wisdom to our leaders, give poise to the men at the helm of the ship of state. Give us unity of purpose and determination in our efforts to purge the world and our own hearts of sin and meanness. When the sword is sheathed and the war is over help us to do justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with Thee.

Amen.

THE END

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